AMBITION

ARTHUR TRAIN

L. H. Bassett

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BY ARTHUR TRAIN

NOVELS

AMBITION
HIGH WINDS
THE BLIND GODDESS
THE NEEDLE'S EYE
HIS CHILDREN'S CHILDREN
THE GOLDFISH
THE EARTHQUAKE
THE WORLD AND THOMAS KELLY
THE CONFESSIONS OF ARTEMAS QUIBBLE
"C. Q."—IN THE WIRELESS HOUSE
THE BUTLER'S STORY

STORIES

THE LOST GOSPEL
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING
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McALLISTER AND HIS DOUBLE
MORTMAIN

ABOUT MR. TUTT

WHEN TUTT MEETS TUTT
PAGE MR. TUTT
TUT, TUT! MR. TUTT
TUTT AND MR. TUTT
BY ADVICE OF COUNSEL
THE HERMIT OF TURKEY HOLLOW

ABOUT LAW AND LAWYERS

THE PRISONER AT THE BAR
ON THE TRAIL OF THE BAD MEN
COURTS, CRIMINALS, AND THE CAMORRA

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By

Arthur Train

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AMBITION

CHAPTER I

§ 1

SIMON KENT at the age of ten had achieved the distinction of having been "fired" from three several schools: from the first—a kindergarten—because he absolutely declined to join the confiding circle of sticky infants; from the second—a cultural primary affair—for publicly refusing to accept the Kris Kringle dogma:

> "What brings old Santa Claus for Frances?
> O, a new wax doll that dances,
> Brings old Santa Claus for Frances!"

"There ain't any Santa Claus! It's just your own father dressed up in whiskers!" he had shouted, to the horror of Miss Erma Perkins, who was fresh from the shades of Simmons College.

Even when Miss Perkins had gently taken him aside and in a highly complimentary manner had whispered that, other little boys and girls not being intellectually as advanced, he should keep his scientific discoveries to himself, he had been obdurate. "But if it ain't so, it's a lie!—And you're a liar!—I won't pretend!"

The third time—three years later—was from Smith & Horton's School for Boys, for fighting and generally disorderly conduct.

"He's entirely too unruly," declared Principal Smith. "We naturally try to encourage independence of thought, but your son seems to be of the opinion that nobody knows anything except himself. We can't constantly be giving reasons for everything. But, all that aside, his predilection for using his fists makes his further reten-

tion in the school impossible. He has nearly killed Davis Pettibone—twice—without provocation. I am sorry, but this is final."

"O hell!" said Simon's father, and took him away.

Save for the Pettibone incident Simon might have entered Harvard via Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Hill. It was, for him, a fork in the social road. Everybody knew that if Davis Pettibone, Senior, had not been one of the trustees of the school, and Davis, Junior, such a jellyfish, the matter would have been overlooked.

Simon at this time was a frail blond boy, much too tall for his age—with a wide upcurling mouth, freckles, and blue defiant eyes. Davis Pettibone was abnormally fat. Besides being credited by his parents with preternatural intellectual brilliancy, he had achieved enormous distinction through having been run over by a rubber-tired racing-buggy, without noticeable harm.

"Just a bellyache! Gone in an hour!" he boasted, and soon became insufferable.

The house next to Smith & Horton's on Mt. Vernon Street had a semi-subterranean laundry into which it was possible for the boys to peer, through a grated window, and watch two white-haired negroes—a man and a woman—at their work. Nourished upon legends of John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, and Charles Sumner, curly-haired Simon looked upon the black and allied races with tender sentimentalism. To him these two scrubbing at their tubs symbolized the tragedy of an oppressed people, to whom he and all mankind owed a debt that never could be repaid. While he was leaning against the grating in the grass plot sympathetically regarding their labors, Davis Pettibone stole upon him.

"Huh!" sneered Davis in an irritating nasal squeak. "Watchin' niggers!" And, since this sally drew no fire

from Simon, he pressed his mouth to the open grating and shrieked tauntingly:

"Nigger!—Nigger!"

Simon faced him furiously.

"You dare say that again and I'll lick you!"

"Huh!—I *guess* you will!"

Cautiously Davis again approached the grating.

"Nigger!" he remarked sotto voce.

Whereupon and without more ado Simon smote him with a half-hook upon the nose, and Davis, screaming, fled.

Simultaneously appeared Principal Smith from above and Uncle Tom from below.

"If dat young rascal don't stop callin' us niggers I'll get a warrant fo' his arrest!" shouted the latter, pointing at Simon, who, on the point of explaining his innocence, remembered that to do so would involve the unfortunate Davis, held his peace and was ignominiously marched to the cell of punishment.

Equally, if inversely, ironic was the sequel in which Davis sought to appease the avenging wrath and re-establish himself in Simon's good-will by inviting him to a secret conference in his back-yard.

"You come along and I'll tell you sump'n!" he whispered mysteriously.

"What is it, you little sneak?"

"You just come! Maggie'll give us some cookies anyway!"

Lured by this appeal to his baser nature, Simon followed the stealthy lead of his companion, to the smelly recess behind the swill-box.

"I know how babies are born," quacked the leering Davis.

"So do I!" retorted Simon, hungry for the cookies.

"No, you don't! Not the way you think!—My dad told me himself! Listen——"

And with considerable accuracy for one so young, and an unrivalled picturesqueness for any age, Davis confided what he had been told. He finished with a complacent gurgle that changed to a howl of anguish.

"Liar! Damn rotten little liar!" yelled Simon, knocking the head of his well-intentioned, if salacious, victim violently against the swill-box.

"Bur-rh!" he remarked to the prostrate and bleeding Davis, as he wiped his hands on the leg of his Plymouth Rock pants. "You dirty pig! Tell that to anybody else, and I'll kill you!—Understand?"

Davis fully understood. He did not repeat it to anybody else until Simon had left Smith & Horton's the following week.

At a later period, Simon, learning of his error, sought out his victim and endeavored to make amends.

"Honest, I'm sorry!—But I didn't believe it, you know!—How could I?"

But the gelatinous Davis refused to be placated.

"Glad I got you fired," he shrilled contemptuously. "It'll teach you to believe some of the things you're told!"

Unfortunately it did not. It only served to sharpen Simon's abiding sense of the irony of life and the injustice of man to man.

§ 2

Simon's mother, Mary Randolph, had been born in Richmond and traced her ancestry to many of the "tidewater aristocracy" of the Old Dominion, among them the Jeffersons and the Peytons. Her grandfather had

been Hungarian, a friend and fellow officer of Kossuth's, who had found refuge in America after the capitulation of Vilagos and the collapse in 1849 of the insurrection against Austria. Of titled birth, highly educated, speaking English fluently, he had become a clerk in the law office of her great-grandfather, Judge Macklin Wythe. The romantic atmosphere surrounding this tall, dark follower of a lost cause was enhanced by a deep melancholy, varied by occasional outbursts of temper and gaiety, which could not fail of appeal to a sentimental coterie of young ladies in whose veins flowed blood no less chivalric, and who still cultivated the traditional court manner of the Stuarts.

Mary Wythe, the judge's second daughter, in due course became Madam Arpad Kuska. They had but one child,—a daughter, Mary,—in whom the sensitive idealism of the Randolph strain was united with an even more militant democracy than that of Jefferson, and for whom Patrick Henry's historic "Give me liberty or give me death!" was echoed in her own father's career.

Arpad Kuska fell at Shiloh, a brigadier-general of the Confederacy. His daughter, Mary Kuska, was Simon's grandmother. Her husband, one of her more distant Randolph cousins, died a few years after their marriage. She survived him fifteen years, having in the meantime arranged for her own daughter Mary's education in a well-known Boston "finishing"-school, recommended by her relatives, the Coolidges.

Here at Papanti's select dancing-academy, on Tremont Row—with its famous elastic floor and clustered chandeliers—Mary Randolph met young Warren Kent, senior at Harvard and son of the Reverend Emanuel Kent, Unitarian clergyman of Roxbury, and, what was far worse in the social Boston of those days, an advo-

cate of labor-unions and of "women's rights." Had it not been for the incontrovertible fact that the Reverend Kent's great-grandfather had worn paint and feathers at the "Boston Tea Party," and his mother been one of the original "Brook Farm colony," his son, Warren, would never have "made" Papanti's. Even the coldest of cold-roast Boston could hardly turn an entire shoulder to the grandchild of an associate of Emerson and a friend of Margaret Fuller Ossoli. Thus, so to speak, the Declaration of Independence and the Hungarian struggle for liberty, meeting upon the wooden staircase of Papanti's, paused, drew breath, embraced, and begat Simon Kent.

§ 3

The opinions which in 1875 so shocked Roxbury and Mt. Vernon Street would be regarded as puerile by the intelligentzia of to-day. Nevertheless they cost Emanuel Kent his parish. To advocate the political equality of women was to be ridiculous, irreligious, and indelicate, and one had but to read the Psalms, Job, or the prophet Isaiah to know that God had not only given his benediction to capitalism but had personally invented the system. To question it was both to defy the Creator and simultaneously to show oneself a "nincompoop"—a favorite word of that period. Socialism, in the modern sense, was undreamed of; John Spargo was in swaddling clothes; and Gladstone was yet to rehearten a world momentarily depressed by the vision of monkey ancestors, by writing "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture!" Probably the Reverend Emanuel Kent should never have been a clergyman. Certainly he could not have held a chair in any New England university. He merely asserted his belief in the right of workers to

bargain collectively for the reward of their toil. In consequence, nevertheless, he was denounced as an "anarchist" in a land dedicated to freedom of thought, and in the very "Cradle of Liberty" itself.

Simon could just remember his grandfather, a pale, silvery-haired man, prematurely old, who, when not working among the negroes upon the other side of Beacon Hill, or the Irish and Italians of the North End, spent most of his time at the Boston Athenæum writing a "History of Human Liberty." To Simon he seemed very old indeed. Then there came a time when his grandfather was no longer there.

Years later, Simon found in the back of the old escritoire in the library a faded sheet of note-paper upon which was etched in his grandfather's fine hand:

"None have I taught to bend the bow and set the swift shaft free,
Who have not in the end, for thanks, their arrows aimed at me!"

§ 4

Simon's family lived on Louisburg Square in a small house with a front dining-room below the street surface, on a level with the kitchen, and a tiny library overlooking a series of back yards which harbored countless cats. His father taught history and economics at Boston University, a short distance up the hill, which enabled him to come home to lunch, and one of Simon's earliest recollections was of waiting with his mother at the window for the lanky figure to loom round the corner of the snowy Square. Then they would both rush to the door and fling themselves upon him as he came up the steps.

"O, Warren darling, I'm so glad to see you!" was his

mother's inevitable cry as she threw her arms around his neck and drew down his big sandy head. Then his father, having kicked his galoshes into the coat-closet and smelling strongly of pipe-tobacco and very prickly as to chin, would grab each of them under an arm and lug them down-stairs with him to the dining-room.

His father and mother always seemed to agree as to everything, and, of course, to Simon, whatever they believed was absolutely right. It did not occur to him that the opinions which they expressed so freely might be the reason why so few people came to the house. Neither did he for a moment imagine that his beautiful sweet mother could be lonely. He was much too busy shooting at cats with his bean-blower or sling-slot, "cutting-on" to the runners of the "booby-hutches" that swung through the slush along Charles and Chestnut Streets, joining a gang of "muckers" to fight the "dudes" of Commonwealth Avenue and thereafter yelling insults and defiance at the "pealers" who, summoned by anxious mothers, attempted to quell the disturbance,—much too engrossed to realize to what an extent his parents' liberal views led them to be regarded with disapproval by their neighbors on Beacon Hill.

"I gave 'em plenty to chew on to-day!" his father would remark, masticating vigorously himself. "I don't care whether Hackett likes it or not! He can take it or leave it. If I stay on there I shall tell 'em the truth, no matter what that old fathead says!"

But if his father was rough with trustees and governing boards, he was gentleness itself with Simon and with Simon's mother. And if few outsiders frequented the house, there was enough music inside to make up for their neglect. Mrs. Kent played charmingly upon the piano and her husband was a sympathetic performer

upon the violin. On Saturday nights they assembled an amateur quartet consisting of two old Germans, Rudesheim and Stepp, both barbers by profession, who played second violin and double-bass respectively, and a young Hungarian from an importing-house, who was a student of the viola and had brought letters to Mrs. Kent from her connections in Buda Pesth. On these occasions Simon would creep down-stairs in his pyjamas and listen rapturously outside the library. Drugged with sleep and harmony he would cuddle at the door in his father's overcoat until he heard the stands being taken down and knew that the concert was over; and once, when he was discovered there asleep, Rudesheim picked him up and insisted on carrying him down with them to the dining-room where a feast of pretzels, sausages, and scrambled eggs was laid out on the stained-oak table and where, at Stepp's insistent request, Simon was allowed to imbibe a tiny amount of *schnapps*. Both Stepp and Rudesheim were men well over sixty, native Prussians, whose hatred of militarism had led them to emigrate to America. They were burly and affectionate, with soft gray eyes and rotund abdomens, and, after the *schnapps*, would light their pipes and indulge in guttural Hegelian argument, warble sentimental duets, and quote Goethe and Schiller without end. For Simon, the highest point of human ecstasy was to have Stepp spread his legs and taunt:

"You tink you vas giant, eh? Vell, you yoost punch Papa Stepp in dem stomach mit your fist—ja, hard as you can!——"

Whereupon Simon would pull back his puny arm and smite the barber's convexity with what seemed to him the force of a lance at rest, but without the slightest effect upon the tight globular surface.

"Is dot all? No harder can you hit?—Notink! Notink at all!—Ha-ha! You vas baby yet!"

Rudesheim was a lonely bachelor, but he had an asthmatic dachshund—"Karl"—who waddled after him wherever he went. To Simon the two Germans were the embodiment of everything that was sweet and good, and he hoped that his father would ultimately become exactly like them. One reason for this, of course, was that they never charged him anything when they cut his hair.

On Sunday mornings Simon's mother took him to the Church of St. James-the-Less, where a white-robed figure intoned resonantly out of a candle-lit gloom smelling of sour pew-cushions. His father remained at home in bed, reading a colored picture-paper called *Puck*. Simon did not like the enforced quiescence connected with religion. Neither did he have any idea what it was all about. He could not understand why an omnipotent God should have allowed his only son to be tortured by the Jews. It seemed to him both heartless and unnecessary. Besides, the only Jew he knew, Mr. Pocker, the little Charles Street tailor, who pressed his father's trousers twice a month, did not seem in the least bloodthirsty.

For the rest he led a care-free buccaneering life over which his parents exercised little restraint; in winter, coasting on the Common, stealing rides upon the sleighs known as "pungs" which, driven by amiable red-cheeked grocerymen, jingled up and down the alleys; skating and "running tiddledies" on the Fens, Muddy River, Stony Brook or the backwaters of the River Charles; playing "robbers and police" over the back-yard fences, building fires and roasting potatoes in the vacant lots of the Back Bay, climbing perilously over skeleton buildings in proc-

ess of construction, digging dandelions which he sold to his father for ten cents a quart, or, provisioned with a sandwich and an apple, trekking into the mysterious wildernesses of Roxbury or Jamaica Plain, to return weary and footsore, but with a delicious sense of reckless adventure, long after the street lamps had been lit. He was always torn between the sense of superiority engendered by the length of these excursions and his desire to get back to see his mother. She never scolded him—no matter how late he was, and always seemed to appreciate perfectly the importance of waiting in order that some particular eel or horned pout might have the opportunity to bite again.

She was tall and gracefully built, with chestnut hair and veiled eyes of dark brown. Simon thought her the most beautiful person in the world.

§ 5

The library was a cosey room, with a chintz wall-paper, a high chimney-grate, and a smouldering sea-coal fire to the maintenance of which Simon contributed by bringing in small bundles of wood, after the example of the home-going workmen he saw upon the streets. These fragments were gravely burned, with apparent appreciation, by his father. In the mornings the library blazed with sun, and in the afternoons it was filled with a mellow light reflected from the opposite windows. After the *débâcle* at Smith & Horton's Simon passed whole days browsing along the shelves among his grandfather's books—books bound in faded cloth and annotated with marginal notes in that same fine hand,—Godwin's "Political Science," Plato's "Republic," "Life of Lord Byron," Rousseau's "Social Contract," Voltaire, "The

Origin of Species," Paine's "Age of Reason," "Das Kapital," the social experiments of Fourier, Cabet, and the works of Thomas Jefferson. And there was another shelf, belonging to his mother, on which stood a row of pamphlets and a few volumes on the emancipation of women and the equality of the sexes. He read some of the latter with considerable interest, in particular one dealing with certain things called "sexual relations" which he did not understand.

§ 6

It was during the interim—while his parents were as yet undecided what to do with him—that Simon, who had been playing marbles with Jamie Murphy, the son of the Beacon Street livery-stable keeper, returned home with a bad headache. Pulse and temperature confirmed the suspicion that something was the matter with him, and for five days he remained in bed, suffering from the light attack of measles innocently transmitted with the compliments of the Murphy family, through whose multitudinous branches it had already run its course. He was out playing a week later. After lunch his father, while lighting his pipe, said:

"Good thing he got it! He'd 'a' taken it later anyhow and it's better to have it over with.—Ever had it?"

His wife shook her head.

"Maybe—but I don't think so. I remember having mumps when I was a little girl——"

"O, well, older people don't often get such things!"

His mother did not call him as usual one morning, and when he came down-stairs he met Doctor Josiah Beebe just leaving the room.

"So here's the little carrier!" remarked the doctor

with false heartiness. "What do you mean by giving your mother measles?"

Simon's heart stood still.

"Has she got—? Oh, may I see her?"

"Of course you can see her.—You're about the only person who can!"

Simon watched the doctor pass the turn on the stairs and then rushed in to his mother's bedside. She was strangely pale and her eyes had a glaze over them, but she gave him her usual sweet smile.

"Good morning, dear," she whispered huskily. "How is my little boy to-day?"

"O Mom! I'm so sorry I gave you the measles!"

"That's all right, darling. It's not your fault. I'll be well in no time.—Now run out and have a—good play."

Simon tiptoed down-stairs. His father was standing nervously before the library fire in company with Doctor Beebe.

"Of course, if she never had measles as a child it may go pretty hard with her. But there's nothing you can do. You say she's always been an absolutely well woman? I only wish she had had a few things and built up some resistance! Well, s'long. See you to-night. Tell better then."

His father stood looking after the doctor.

"There isn't—any—danger, is there?" he asked in a peculiar tone.

Doctor Beebe turned, with his foot in the air above the stairs.

"When an older person gets measles—particularly one who has had no illnesses—there's always danger that it may run into something else."

All of which meant very little to Simon except to confuse and distress him and give him a sense of guilt.

Next day his father stayed at home, and in the afternoon an authoritative woman, carrying a grip, rang the bell and hurried up-stairs to reappear presently arrayed in crisp white. Simon, who had been excluded from his mother's bedroom, was astonished at the meekness with which his father obeyed the nurse's orders. For four days they prowled about the house, while his mother's temperature leaped and plunged like a frantic horse. Occasionally a faint cough—hardly audible—came from behind her door. His father sat most of the time in the library, collarless and otherwise unkempt, twisting his hands and staring into the fire. Late in the afternoon of the sixth day the nurse quietly asked him to fetch the no longer jovial Doctor Beebe. When they returned, a half-hour later, Simon's mother was already dead—from double bronchial pneumonia following measles.

Warren Kent, broken-hearted, did his best to make Simon see why he was not to blame for the terrible tragedy that had befallen them—otherwise the boy might have thrown himself into the river. But he did not tell him that his darling mother was "safe in the Saviour's arms, in heaven." He merely said: "There may be a life hereafter, son, and there may not be. Personally I have no evidence of it. Your mother is dead, Simon, and she won't come back. I never expect to see her again except in memory. I'd be false to her if I said I did. She wouldn't have me tell you anything else. She was one of the loveliest women who ever lived, and the best way for you to show your devotion for her is to be as like her as you can and—if you believe in them—to stand for the things she stood for."

CHAPTER II

§ 1

Ruggers' Church Academy, the anachronistic establishment in western New York to which Simon was sent for the reason that, through the influence of a friend, his father had been able to secure him a scholarship, had been founded by an immensely devout and no less wealthy spinster, Miss Anne Ruggers of Utica, with the expressed intention of creating "an institution for the education of Christian boys, as nearly perfect as possible." To this end she had devoted a fortune of several millions to the erection of a symmetrical group of gray stone buildings in the style of the Gothic renaissance, as hygienic as a model stock-farm, and with a chapel the cost of whose interior carvings alone would have maintained several well-equipped hospitals.

The Head was a beefy man with pale-blue eyes glinting out of a porcine face, who, having married into the Ruggers family, had thereafter taken orders, as the first and obvious step to business opportunity. He affected a hybrid ecclesiastical accent, intoned as much of the service as was permissible in an adenoidal tenor and was familiarly known as "Bozo the Bastard." At Ruggers scholarship was but the handmaid of piety, and to the Reverend Theophilus Dignum it was infinitely more important that a boy should be able to answer "N or M" to the question "What is your name or names?" than that he should know the binomial theorem or the population of the United States. He regarded the members of all other churches as sheep which had not only gone astray but deserved to be severely trounced, and he was quoted positively as stating that while there might be

deserving or even worthy persons among the so-called Presbyterians they would not move upon the same plane in the Kingdom of Heaven as the Episcopalians. No unbaptized and hence unregenerate applicants could be received into his fold and, once admitted, all were marshalled in squads to the communion-rail. Simon, now thirteen, obstinately refused to be lassoed, frankly preferring damnation to involuntary confirmation.

Why the heretic was retained in the school while refusing the privilege of the Holy Sacrament remained a never-divulged mystery.

"But he's such a dear, Theo!—And he looks so handsome carrying the cross at the head of the choir!" urged Mrs. Dignum in the privacy of their bedchamber. "You mustn't send him away!"

"Well! I'll keep him anyhow until his voice changes," replied her husband.

§ 2

Simon's voice eventually changed, yet he remained at Ruggers, while other and true believers got the sack. He had shot up into a tall, slightly stooping, untidy youth with large white teeth frequently displayed in a generous and disarming smile,—and though his hair was sandy rather than auburn he was nicknamed "Red." He was annoyingly inquisitive, startlingly honest, wholly without reverence, rather rough, often churlish, wore filthy collars, and his table manners were atrocious.

During his sojourn at Ruggers he learned a number of things outside the curriculum, in somewhat the following order: that the sons of bishops, archdeacons, and millionaires were treated with a consideration denied to those born of poor but honest parents; that you could

hatch frogs' eggs in tin biscuit-cans and breed newts in the same; that the servant girls, or "bids," who made up the cubicles and waited upon the tables in the refectory, were viewed by the higher authorities, for some curious reason, as devils in human form; and that some of the younger and more daffodilic masters were exceptionally kind to little boys. He also found the outline figures of nymphs and goddesses in the vocabulary of his "Allen & Greenough's Latin Grammar" irresistibly attractive. Soon he discovered how cruelly unjust he had been to Davis Pettibone.

In his second year he had a disquieting experience. He had returned unexpectedly from the athletic field to get a pair of sneakers out of his cubicle and to do so was obliged to pass the door of Mr. Percy Fay, the master in charge of the dormitory, who was "on house bounds." According to law Mr. Fay should have been in the hall down-stairs, but, surprisingly, he was not. Through a crack in the door Simon could see Lena, a big flaxen-haired Swede, and she seemed to be sitting on Mr. Fay's lap. He could not tell why this so revolted him, but it did.

Throughout the winter months Simon played hockey, took long walks through the white silent woods, and, when the dreary Easter term set in and the school was isolated from the world by an ocean of mud, read prodigiously. With the breaking of spring he decided to become a poet, but after a few experiments concluded that biology was more in his line.

He also learned how to brew chocolate in his bureau-drawer, over an alcohol-lamp, concealing the fumes with a damp bath-towel; how to pronounce the Greek alphabet erroneously; and that sweet fern could be made a passable substitute for tobacco.

It was in his fourth year that he discovered *Beauty*, through the medium of Messrs. Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and he passed quivering nights, tortured by longings for he knew not what, dwelling for a time in a shadowy world where lustrous-eyed brunettes knelt upon the borders of lily-covered streams. He forsook the baseball field and, the victim of a mysterious lassitude, would spend hours lying in his cubicle with his eyes fixed upon the saccharine features of an olive-skinned virgin in a pink sash holding out a cake of soap. Thus "Dodger" Ferguson, the chief of the "gum-shoe squad" of masters, caught him.

"What are you doing, Kent?" he asked suspiciously. "Reading? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, staying indoors a beautiful day like this. Get up and get out!"

It was at this time that Simon's voice changed definitely. Denied the innocent charms of the Procter & Gamble maiden who was at least $99\frac{99}{100}$ pure, he fell in love with Flora Pickley, the daughter of the athletic instructor, whose percentage was somewhat lower. She was stubby, with a large calf-like face and sausage-shaped brown arms covered with white hair, but for the moment she exercised an uneasy lure for him. The amour, at least so far as it concerned Simon, was both tentative and experimental. In its delayed culmination it was abortive. Shocked by Flora's unexpected responsiveness, he hastily withdrew into a dazed chastity in which he sought to sublimate his passion by the collection of birds' eggs.

During that year Simon began to shave three times a week, instead of once as formerly; discovered that he was dirty and incurred a bill of $49.87 for extra wash; was elected a member of the "Tweezers," a mysterious

secret order that met in a wood-closet and branded its neophytes on the chest by means of mustard-plaster; acquired a general knowledge of obstetrics by attending the rapid-fire accouchement of a sow belonging to one Murch, a neighboring farmer; won the junior shot-putting contest and the half-mile run; was confined in the schoolroom at various intervals, totalling 27 hours, for talking back; went to chapel 329 times; pretended to listen to 74 sermons while reading a carefully prepared scroll composed of clippings from the *Scientific American;* paid $4.50 for a pink tie with diagonal green spots, and $13.00 for a pair of pointed patent-leather shoes; was awarded the "Demosthenes Medal" for debate; had several lovely fights back of the "gym"; passed his college preliminaries; and was nearly fired for smoking, being saved therefrom because he had just been chosen as bow on the school crew.

"Dirty Dog Dodger" Ferguson was the cause of his near undoing. This bewhiskered dandy, once the school bully and bad boy, had been, like the apostle Paul, suddenly converted, and, having been rewarded therefor with a gold-plated medal, had stayed on—part master, part big brother, part man-about-town—to proselytize for Christ and to persecute Sin. He had a nose like a foxhound's, a genius for detecting crime, a fantastic taste in neckwear, and more tricks than a Kentucky gambler. His proper place was at the head of some metropolitan homicide-squad.

"Ha, Kent!" he cried, grasping "Red" enthusiastically by his right hand and drawing him forward so as better to smell his breath. "That—sniff—was a—sniff—wonderful run—sniff—of yours in the second half—sniff—sniff—this afternoon.—You've been smoking!—Come and see the Head."

Now Simon had been smoking—the last half of a "Sweet Cap" given him by the football captain in recognition of his recent services—but that "the Dodger," who had been notorious for similar derelictions, should treacherously betray him was too much.

"O come, Dodger! You wouldn't!" he protested incredulously.

"Why wouldn't I? You're violating one of the basic rules of the school—it hurts me to do it, but I've no choice."

Simon's fingers itched.

"Don't be a sneak, Dodger! You smoked all last year and you know it!"

"To my everlasting shame!"

"Hell!"

"Don't use profanity! If you do I'll report you for that too."

"Dirty rat!"

Next instant they were prostrate, clawing one another on the cinder track. It was an unfortunate affair for Simon, who lost half a bicuspid and was otherwise severely battered, but he always claimed that to punch that "doggoned hypocrite" in the bread-basket was worth the price. All the way back Ferguson labored earnestly to convert his victim to Christianity. As they reached the door of Doctor Dignum's office Simon turned to him.

"For God's sake, don't say 'Jesus Christ' to me again!"

Simon was not expelled. Instead, he was graciously permitted to stay in three afternoons each week for the balance of the term—in order that he might repent and later enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

He was the first to cross the line and trail his oar when,

in June, Ruggers won the boat-race on Lake Cayuga against Hepley.

§ 3

Save for the "Pie House Charlie" incident in his fifth year, Simon would have left Ruggers in good standing, the recipient of an imitation-parchment diploma certifying in Latin to his general probity and profound learning. As it was, he took with him an accumulation of tarnished pewter-cups, a detestation of dogma, and an abiding sense of injustice. Throughout the winter, vague rumors concerning alcohol had been persistently current, and the dormitories were sibilant with the "Dodger's" frustrated sniffing. It was common knowledge that some of the upper classmen had whiskey, although where they got it could not be established. "Gabber" Davy, the "Human Ape," was awesomely whispered to have a bottle of "Haig & Haig" from which he daily filled his ink-well in the study, thereafter sucking up the same delectably, behind his "Xenophon's Anabasis," through a hollow pen. Simon, who had never tasted whiskey, was not interested; "Pie House Charlie" was the merest name to him.

He had grown to be one of the tallest boys in the school, and where he had once sung treble he now chanted a deep antiphonal bass. While he did not repeat the creed, he no longer read the *Scientific American* in chapel, or rolled dice beneath his cotta in the choir-stalls. He even liked to attend Sunday-afternoon service, finding it soothing and restful, particularly when he lingered at the close, to listen to the mellow purring of the organ. He did not pray, confident that God knew things without being told, but sitting alone in the shadows he occasionally experienced an unwonted serenity of soul.

On that particular afternoon in May the universe looked enormously pleasing to Simon and, as he slouched along by himself through the humid woods, breathing the fragrance of violet and arbutus, of wet moss and rotting wood, his mind rambled along with him in a sort of mental stock-taking:

"Ruggers—pretty good old place. Sorry to be leaving it, by gosh!—College must be a hell of a lot of fun, though!—There's a jack-in-the-pulpit over there! And a trifolium! 'Bozo's' not such a bad scout, but 'Dodger' Ferguson's a slob! I'd just like to run this school for a while! I'd get rid of all those sissy little clerics, cut out the chapel, and teach something besides the catechism. Wonder if curates are anæmic because they're curates, or curates because they're anæmic. Wish I knew German. I could substitute it for Greek in the finals. Guess I'll pass 'em all right. Wonder who gets the 'Leeds Medal'! 'Bozo'd' never give it to an unbeliever! Not much! D'y s'pose he really believes all that stuff he preaches? How can any one believe it! I know *I* don't! Let him, if he gets any comfort out of it. Glad I got clear of that Flora Pickley. Wonder why I ever liked her!"

Thus musing, Simon failed to perceive that he was following an obscure and unfamiliar path until he unexpectedly found himself upon the shore of a small muddy pond. A short distance away, half-concealed by woods, was a house and thither Simon directed his steps, to inquire his whereabouts. Through the open door he could see some one moving about the front room, and he thrust in his head.

"Hello!—Can you tell me where I am?"

It was a foul-smelling place, where the fumes from the stove mingled with those of the stale bedding on the disordered bunks.

"Guess you're in the right place," drawled a friendly voice. "Lookin' for Charlie's, ain't ye?"

From the shadow emerged a sinister unshaven figure with decaying teeth.

"How far am I from Ruggers?"

The man leered at him.

"'*Kai gar* and of a truth moreover'.—Fur 'nough to be safe!—What'll you make it, young gentleman?"

It dawned upon Simon that this was "Pie House Charlie's" and the place a "blind pig." Gosh, it was a nasty hole! He didn't know much about such things but he guessed if you had the evidence you could send a fellow like that to prison. Anyhow, you could close him up. For once Simon ranged himself on the side of "Bozo" and the angels. He decided to turn detective.

"What you got?"

"Oh, everything! Brandy, gin, scotch,—port,—lickures."

"Give me a bottle of brandy. How much is it?"

"Five dollars."

Simon dug down into his pocket for the money, and "Pie House Charlie" lifted a trap in the floor and lowered himself into it.

"Better take a quart of whiskey, too," he urged. "Give it to you for three bucks."

"No," replied Simon, taking the bottle from him. "This is all I want."

At that moment a man's voice rang from the adjoining room:

"Charlie! O—o Charlie. Where the hell've you gone?—We want more liquor!"

A woman's voice retorted:

"Shut up! Don't make so much noise!"

Charlie hurriedly started to climb out of the hole.

"Comin'!"

"We wa-ant more li-quor!" wailed the voice.

The door in the rear opened, disclosing on the threshold a dishevelled but handsome slattern.

"For God's sake, pop—!" She stopped short at sight of Simon, and gave a signal with her hand. Behind her appeared a rather flushed young man with badly rumpled hair,—Mr. Percy Fay the house master.

"Li-quor! Give us li-quor!" he chanted. Then perceiving Simon, all mirth departed from him.

They were standing thus—the four of them—when with the spring of a cougar "Dodger" Ferguson leaped through the door.

"Got you at last!" he yelled, snatching the bottle from Simon's hand. Before he could turn, the girl had shoved Fay back into the room behind her and slammed the door.

"So!—brandy!—I'm shocked at you, Kent! This means expulsion.—And the boat-race only five weeks off!"

"Look here, Dodger!" panted Simon. "I know your finding me like this looks queer, but I swear to you I never was here before in my life——"

"That's true, Mr. Ferguson," nodded Charlie solemnly. "Never saw this young gentleman before, so help me!"

"I'd heard—same's everybody—about there being liquor going round the school—and this afternoon I got sort of lost and when I found myself here—I—thought—I——"

"Ye-es?" jeered "the Dodger." "Wha-at did you think?"

"—I thought I'd get the evidence and give it to 'Bozo'!" concluded Simon, realizing himself the flatness of the story.

"Perhaps the person who came with you had never been here either!" said Ferguson, throwing wide the door to the bedroom.

It was empty save for the girl who, in a calico wrapper, was rocking by the open window.

"Howd'y, Mr. Ferguson!" she simpered.

"'Said the little red hen to the big white rooster,
"I don't see you round as often as I used-ter!"'"

§ 4

"And so, Kent," said Doctor Dignum two hours later, "I cannot see my way to keep you here any longer. It's a shame at this particular time—just before your graduation and the boat-races. That you won't tell the truth about it adds to your offense; but I suppose a boy who frequents a bawdy house, buys liquor, and distributes it to other boys must be expected to lie about it."

Simon grew hot.

"I haven't lied about it! I told you I just stumb'ed on the place and thought I could get the evidence for you."

The rector smiled a bland, satiric smile.

"Who was with you?"

"No one."

"Mr. Ferguson says you had a companion.—That he escaped through the woods."

"There wasn't any one with me."

"Whether or not he was with you, did you see any one from Ruggers there?"

Simon pressed his lips together. He was morally sure that the "Dodger" had seen Fay, and that, having given him time to make his escape, had indulged in a mere the-

atrical demonstration intended to serve as a blind. Dignum eyed him keenly.

"You won't answer?—I thought so! You are afraid your accomplice might fail to corroborate you!—Very well! Have it as you will!"

The Head stood up and thrust his chin toward Simon, with his hands behind him. His jowled face with its pig's snout was flushed a sullen red.

"I have stood a great deal from you, Kent. Too much, as your present conduct demonstrates! I should never have allowed you to remain in the school after your refusal to accept Christ as your Saviour. You have always been a bad influence. You have been a constant trouble-maker, a scoffer, a sceptic, a defier of authority. You have been lazy, sly, and deceitful. However——"

He tugged nervously at one of his whiskers.

"However—out of consideration for your father—and in view of the fact that to expel you now would involve sacrificing the benefit of your entire five years at Ruggers—if you are sincerely repentant for your offenses—and as evidence of your sincerity will make a full confession, including the name of your associate this afternoon, I will allow you to remain.—What do you say?"

Through the windows of the office Simon looked across the pond to the picturesque Gothic buildings which had been his home for four years. The minute-bell was tolling for afternoon study and down below he could hear the scuffle of feet as the boys pounded and pushed into the big schoolroom. On the green "quad" a corpulent robin ran, paused, jabbed. Pretty good place, Ruggers! He'd miss all the fellows—a lot. And there was the boat-race! Why not deliver that sneaking lecherous Fay to the lions? A good riddance to Ruggers! He looked at the smugly stupid face of the man in front of him. No, by

golly! He'd not be bribed or bullied! If he did what the Head asked he'd end by being just like him. He did not want to be like Theophilus Dignum. He wanted to be himself, Simon Kent! To call his soul his own—if he had one!

"Come, Kent! Think what you are doing," the Head was saying. "This is your one chance. Think what this means to your parents,—to your dear mother, doubtless looking at you now!"

The tears sprang to Simon's eyes. Then he bristled.

"Leave my mother out of it!" he half-sobbed. "I guess I know what she'd want better than a snivelling old hypocrite like you! Fire me if you want to!"

The Reverend Doctor Dignum bit his lips. They were trembling.

"Silence, Kent!"

He reached for the ruler on his desk.

"Hold out your hand!"

Simon wrenched the thing from his grasp and hurled it through the window.

"Go to hell!" he remarked, recalling the comment of his father upon a similar occasion.

Then, stalking out of the study, he closed the door behind him, locked it and slowly descended the stairs with the key in his hand. The bell in the tower uttered a faint satiric clang. Well, he'd jolly well done it now! He might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb. The quad was empty. The boys were all in study. With a thrilling sense of finality Simon threw the key as far as he could toward the middle of the pond.

CHAPTER III

§ 1

It was Simon's salvation that he entered college with the ambition to learn and with a supreme contempt for social distinctions, not lessened by the discovery that his former playmate, Davis Pettibone, now a sophomore, was universally admired as the "funniest drunk Harvard ever had." His shaking bulk was enormous, his voice a squeak, his pasty features without form and void, but his shrill obscenities were received with screams of laughter and he had been on the "Second Fifteen" elected to the "Dicky."

Simon, meeting him for the first time in seven years, hailed him with a familiarity itself an outrage.

"Hello, Davis! How you was?"

Pettibone, not unmindful of the past, regarded him haughtily.

"Hello!" he said unenthusiastically, after a pause. Although he knew that Simon had gone to Ruggers, and had heard rumors of his expulsion, he was puzzled by his shabby appearance.

Simon felt the chill.

"How are things?"

"Fine and dandy!"

"Well, drop in and see me sometime!" said Simon hospitably.

Davis squinted at him, slightly elevating his eyebrows.

"Er—where do you live?" he inquired curiously.

"Thirteen College House.—Glad to see you!"

"Thanks."

There was no counter-invitation. That he had made an unpardonable break in asking a member of the "Second Fifteen" of the class above him to call, did not occur to him. It was only later, when he was being "rushed" by the Kappa Lambdas, that he realized its ineptitude. Even then his heart did not sink; the recollection only made him "mad."

Self-supporting students in those days were not usually invited to join the more exclusive social clubs, and the fact that Simon's only diplomas were letters certifying to his skill as a waiter, from the proprietor of the Twin Mountain House, was not in his favor.

Moreover, he committed the irretrievable error of openly defying the social oligarchy that held Harvard in mortmain, by joining a Greek letter fraternity—such being anathema—in his freshman year.

Simon had brought little to Ruggers and he took even less away with him,—his books, bats, birds' eggs, underclothes in wash and patent-leathers being forwarded to him later on. He returned "bloody but unbowed" to Boston, where his father received unemotionally the news of his expulsion.

"Got to expect that sort of thing," he said between short aggressive puffs of pipe-smoke. "If you play straight and stand by your guns you're bound to get it in the neck sometimes!"

As foretold, Warren Kent "got it in the neck" himself a month later when, by request, he tendered his resignation as associate professor of sociology and economics. Doubtless the good of the service demanded it, for he had become a changed man after the death of his wife.

He was still paying instalments on undertakers' bills, and was otherwise heavily in debt. The house on Louisburg Square was sold. Unfortunately the surplus was

negligible. The senior Kent found a job as reader in a publishing house, and for a while Simon acted as night-clerk in a Chelsea hotel. Later on he answered a "Help Wanted" "ad." in the Boston *Transcript* and during the summer became a "biscuit-shooter" in a New Hampshire hostelry where the guests and employees mingled in gay social equality. Simon did not altogether disdain either the ball-team or the coquettish glances of the fawn-eyed maidens who called him "Mr. Kent" and thanked him so tenderly for handing them the butter. In fact the "ad." had stipulated that he must be able to qualify both as a dancer and as an outfielder. But so far as possible he avoided any entangling alliances foreign to his immediate purposes and managed, by dint of severe application, to pass his finals for Harvard, in the autumn.

§ 2

Mose Lufkin, an earnest person in highwater trousers, who, besides being president of the "Copper Lambs" as they facetiously called themselves, was treasurer of the "Phi Beta Kappa" and secretary of "Phillips Brooks House," was calling, and he was impressive.

"Listen here, Red. I'm going to pay you the compliment of being frank with you. You're a damn good fellow and all that, of course, but so far as making the "Institute" is concerned you haven't got the chance of a celluloid cat in hell. And if you don't make it you can't make anything else. This college is run by a bunch of rich Bostonians and every baby born in the Back Bay inherits a cast-iron social position including membership in a sophomore society. Nothing else counts. You might be the son of the President of the U. S. and you couldn't

pry yourself into the Porcellian or A. D. with a crowbar! They 're a damn lot of snobs and the fellows that bootlick 'em are worse. No man with any feeling of self-respect is going to hang around three or four years waiting to be asked to join some second-choice club that these fellows have turned down!——

"An' what's it all about, anyway? Nobody but a swipe and a toady cares a damn whether he makes one of their confounded societies or not. If you joined, you'd be expected to spend the rest of your college course kow-towing to some ass like that Davis Pettibone or those Hungerfords from New York, who think they're so damn swell. Anyhow, those clubs exist simply to suck up a lot of lush!

"Now, I like you, Red,—for your own sake. I wouldn't suggest anything to you that I thought would stand in your way of something better. But I've looked into the thing quietly and, as one friend to another, I can say this: You cut no ice socially and you're not going to. You went to a fairly swell school, but you were looked upon as pretty fresh and made a good many enemies. Besides, there was a lot of talk when you got fired,—most of it untrue, I suppose. Anyhow, you didn't finish with your own bunch and, of course,—with those fellows—the fact that you waited on table last summer puts the kibosh on you for keeps. Do you suppose they want a fellow who cuts the grass and fixes the furnace up at Channings or Horsfords sitting around in their club? Suppose they had to introduce you to some girl—their sister or something—who'd seen you there? They'd die of shame!

"Another thing, you live here in College House! God, man! Nobody who lived in College House ever got into anything! It's hopeless,—that is, from the snobbish point of view." Lufkin's voice showed emotion. He might have been Daniel Webster making his famous

speech in the Dartmouth College Case. "Now there are men in this God damn college who love it for its own sake and not simply for what social kudos they can get out of it,—honest, manly, hard-working fellows who can afford to disregard this gang of swiping loafers and stand on their own feet,—men as good as anybody, whose fathers are men of honor and whose mothers are real ladies—social leaders—in their own communities. They've got something better to do than lie around and drink and smoke cigarettes and tell smutty stories. They're here to get everything they can out of it and they don't think any less of a fellow because he's earning his own living. I'll tell you who some of 'em are: Tooker, the quarter-miler—he nearly made the Pi Eta; Swartz, prize debater of Exeter; 'Pecky' Smith—a hell of a good fellow—makes you nearly throw fits when he imitates some of the professors;—and Backus, who rowed substitute on his class crew—well, I guess I'm wrong there—. Anyhow, they're a grand lot of chaps and—this is strictly confidential—they've looked you up and they're considering you favorably. Of course they won't elect you unless they know you'll join. They never ask anybody.—What do you say?"

Simon joined the "Copper Lambs."

§ 3

Simon's father died in the Massachusetts General Hospital, after an operation, during his son's freshman year—an old man at the age of forty-four.

"Don't worry!" he whispered as he tightly clutched Simon's hand. "Don't know what it's all about—but I've had enough! You're all right!—" His voice grew fainter—"All right! Like your mother!—She had—

right ideas!—You—try—finish—book—'Liberty'—no bunk!—Tell—truth—no matter—what——!"

He closed his eyes. Simon, choking, bent his head toward the white face.

"All right, dad! I'll try!"

Fifteen minutes later his father was dead. Simon found the manuscript copy of "The History of Human Liberty" in an old valise under the bed at his lodging-house. Nothing had been added to it since his grandfather had penned the chapter on "Industrial Feudalism." Vaguely, with a view to sometime carrying on the work and keeping his promise to his father, he began to specialize in political science, economics, and philosophy.

§ 4

Simon became a "greasy grind." For three years he forswore the world, the devil, and the flesh—in the form of such as Davis Pettibone. In the company of tense, fledgling-necked young men, who wore dirty sweaters and smoked corn-cob pipes, he sought to absorb such facts, scientific, philosophical and economic, as would secure for the possessor an "A.B.," "M.A.," "Ph.D.," or "S.B."—otherwise known as a "Sour-belly"—and could thereafter be readily converted into coin of the realm. At first, Simon was so enthralled by what he learned, that the commercial view-point of these *savants* escaped him. But as time went on he perceived that their concept of beauty was somehow mixed up with what Ike Swillers got per hour tutoring the Muzzy twins.

The "Copper Lambs" were intensely practical. They took their lecture-notes in shorthand, learned them by rote, and sometimes achieved the glory of refuting a professor out of his own mouth. Most of them are to-

day heads of departments in Western State universities or secretaries to millionaires.

Simon took them at their face value and innocently adopted all their manners and customs, including attendance at the gloomy Saturday night "smokers" at which the assembled brothers chanted self-consciously in unison, while pounding their steins on the table:

"O, I'm a Kappa Lamb—Kappa Lamb—Kappa Lamb!
O, I'm a Kappa Lamb!—Yes, I am!
For what you think I am I don't give a damn!
For I'm a Kappa Lamb—Yes, I am!
Ba-a! Ba-a! Ba-a!
Ye—ow!"

Simon believed this to be real college life.

He got four "A's" and a "B" his freshman year, was awarded a scholarship of four hundred dollars, and, joining forces with Otto Wiegand, the son of a South Boston haberdasher, moved from College House to Stoughton. Otto was a hound for work and cracked the lash of labor over Simon's stooping shoulders, tearing the blankets off him in the morning and shouting:

"Get up, you bum! It's six-thirty already—and your turn to make the chocolate! We gotta do three chapters of Locke before eight o'clock.—The hell you won't! Yes, you can have the basin—I'm not going to wash—yet!—But for God's sake, get *up!*"

During those three disciplinary years Simon wore a black jersey to avoid laundry bills, a shabby sack-suit much too short for him, and never so much as laid eyes on Davis Pettibone. So far as sex was concerned, he might have been St. Simeon Stylites. No skirt rustled for him. If there was a social hierarchy he was oblivious of it, and the college authorities knew him not. He had

now nearly attained his full height, six feet one, but he was distinctly underfed, and hollow-eyed from overwork. He took practically no exercise, as he no longer was obliged to cut grass and shake down furnaces for his living, and, having made up their minds to cut the four years to three, Otto and he had agreed to put in not less than fifteen hours a day. He rarely went to the theatre or a concert, and, in spite of the fact that he had rowed on the crew at Ruggers, his knowledge of college athletics was purely vicarious.

Simon did not get drunk until the end of his junior year, but when he did so he left nothing whatever to be desired. Had he, as in the original scheme of things, entered college like a gentleman instead of like a "mucker," he would certainly have been drunk a considerable part of the time,—certainly on all important occasions. As it was, he escaped that state of inebriation to which it might have pleased Providence to call him.

Looking for a convenient half-course to round out the term, he picked "English Elocution," given by Mr. J. J. Hayes—otherwise known as "Hay Hay Jayes,"—a round, reddish gentleman in a blue suit who most surprisingly knew his business. In his leisure hours he coached bishops and amateur actors and showed them how to breathe. Under his adept instruction Simon's chest expanded as much as it might have on the river.

Mr. Hayes plucked him by the elbow one day in March.

"Er—Mr. Kent! May I have a word?—You really have an exceptionally fine voice.—O, yes you have! Just say 'All-call-Paul!'—Now again—like this, 'A-a-l c-a-a-l P-a-a-aul!'—Don't you hear that tone?—Why don't you go in for the 'Boylston Prize-Speaking'? You've plenty of time for it. I would if I were you.—O, yes you

can! Pardon my saying so, but you don't make enough of yourself. You certainly could stand up straighter than that, if you wanted to!—Think it over."

Thinking it over, Simon wondered if "Hay Hay" meant anything more than he said. Probably he could stand straighter if he wanted to. He observed also that a collar might improve his general appearance. As for the speaking-contest, there was no harm in trying. It might be an easy way to "pull down" a hundred dollars.

The "Copper Lambs" took his new venture jocosely.

"I'm a Lamb," said Simon. "Hear me ba-a!"

§ 5

Mr. Hayes was not enthusiastic over Simon's choice of "The Defence of Lucknow." The judges were apt to be ultra-conservative, he said, and the "piece" was rather melodramatic and full of vocal pyrotechnics. However, it was too late to change. Simon, always dubious, would have chucked it, had he not feared the Lambs' derision. Otto, on the other hand, assured him that he was unequivocally magnificent.

"Now don't get cold feet. It'll be a good change for 'em. I tell you, you'll make those old birds sit up!" and he thoughtfully borrowed from his father's South Boston haberdashery such raiment as Simon's wardrobe lacked.

On the night of the contest Simon was convoyed to Sanders Theatre by the entire flock, given a shot of brandy on an empty stomach, and shoved, half-fainting, upon the stage. He had never drunk brandy before and for one dreadful moment he thought he was going to be sick. The rows of blurred lights, the half-filled seats, rushed up at him—and rocked away again. He

gaped, wiped his forehead. What was the first line? What *was* it!

"'Dead Princess—'" hissed Otto from the front row. He grabbed her.

"Dead Princess, living Power," began Simon in a husky voice, "if that, which lived true life, live on——"

The lights cleared, the hall came to anchor. He could see the "old birds" right there in front of him—funny little whiskered birds! He felt immeasurably their superior—strong as a lion—taller than the Bumper Hill Monument. Prickles ran up and down his back. It was nothing to stand there and speak! He pitied himself because there were not more people to hear his glorious effort. His voice strengthened—rose—echoed from the balcony. Lucknow was holding its own. Could it last until relief arrived?

"'Mine? Yes, a mine! Countermine!'" Simon, as an imaginary sapper, crouched listening for the invisible pick, then dug furiously with a phantom spade. He was possessed by the thrill of battle. Bullets fell upon and around him and he shed them at the "old birds." Cannon roared, bugles sounded, the wounded were carried off—"Millions of musket-bullets, and thousands of cannon-balls—"—Hark! What was that? The cheers of the relieving column? Havelock!—Thank God! Thank God!

"Saved! we are saved!—Saved by the valor of Havelock! saved by the blessing of Heaven!—And ever aloft on the palace roof—the old banner of England blew."

He staggered back sobbing, into the wings.

"Gosh! You were simply great!" enthused Otto. "Say, Red! Where'd you ever learn how to do it! Honest, you ought to go on the stage. You had 'em groggy!"

Even the crowd of previously cynical and carping

Lambs agreed that "Red" had done all right. Maybe a bit theatrical,—but all right!

Simon had been the last on the programme and the whiskered "birds" now retired in single file, to reach their decision. They were gone so long that the sparse audience of friends and relatives began to fidget. At length Professor Wilkinson, the chairman, the smallest little "bird" of all, ascended the platform.

"You win!" whispered Otto.

Professor Wilkinson, nervously combing his beard with the fingers of his right hand, cleared his throat and stated with a certain dryness that the unfortunate delay was due to the difficulty of deciding between two renditions of such superlative excellence that there was little or nothing to choose between them ("Bunk!" muttered Otto. "There was no one in sight of you!"), those in question being a portion of Daniel Webster's Bunker Hill Oration as interpreted by Mr. George Washington Lee, and the Twenty-third Psalm as given by Mr. Horatio Clapsaddle—and the committee had finally decided in favor of Mr. Lee, with second money to Mr. Clapsaddle. "The Defence of Lucknow" was not mentioned by him at all.

Simon was sure there had been a mistake,—Professor Wilkinson had read the wrong name or one from the wrong paper, or perhaps the judges had become so excited over the Lee-Clapsaddle dispute as to forget all about him. But when Messrs. Lee and Clapsaddle in response to violent, if scattered, applause, arose and bowed, he perceived that he was merely a victim of race prejudice—Mr. Lee being coal black.

"Well, of all the gol darned things!" shouted Otto indignantly once they got outside. "And to give it to that gol darned nigger. It's getting so in this gol

darned place a feller can't get anywhere unless he's black. You simply wiped 'em all off the map, but Wilkinson wanted to give it to the coon and so he had to pretend that Clapsaddle was runner-up and that you weren't in it.—Well, of all the gol darned things!"

Otto was for bearding Wilkinson then and there, and putting him in "a hell of a hole," by challenging the good faith of the committee. He asserted that Harvard College was reeking with snobbishness of one sort or another,—social, intellectual, ethnological.

"If I was one of these niggers I wouldn't want to put myself in that position!" he declared earnestly. "I honestly wouldn't!—It's un-American!"

Between them they finished the flask of brandy and, unanimously concluding that there was nothing really fit to drink that side of the Charles River, took the surface-car to Boston. Simon next day faintly recalled watching part of one act of a burlesque show on Tremont Row and later visiting the Adams House bar where he and Otto determined to demonstrate their capacity to drink right through "The Bar Keeper's Handbook,"—A for ale, B for beer, C for cognac, etc. They got tangled among the G's, were ejected by a "bouncer," engaged in a heated argument over the authorship of the words "all men are created equal," appealed to a policeman to settle the question, were ordered to "move on," and, after a lachrymose reconciliation, decided that personal honor demanded that they finish the balance of the alphabet and got as far as M, during all of which period Simon was firmly convinced of his own sobriety, although fully aware of the unfortunate condition of his friend.

Minus Otto, who mysteriously "died" on him, and also minus his hat, Simon, having regaled his fellow passengers on the "last car" out to Cambridge with selec-

tions from "The Defence of Lucknow," during which he was almost overcome by his own eloquence, was deposited in Harvard Square at about 2.30 A. M., and, still holding his own, worked his way across the deserted yard. A single lamp gleamed like a friendly beacon from one of the windows of Stoughton—his, he decided! The thoughtful Otto, having arrived home before him, must have placed it there. "A light in the window for me, mother!"

He found difficulty in crossing the yard owing to the large number of wire fences which had suddenly sprung up and which he had never before observed. As fast as he got his legs over one he found himself confronted by another! And the steps of Stoughton were so obstructive that he was obliged to negotiate them on his hands and knees.

"A Lamb returning to hish fold!" commented Simon. "The propheth whish wash without honor in hish own country returneth.—Mush be sober if I can say re-turneth!" he assured himself.

Still couchant, he ascended the stairs, emitting at each pause a triumphant "b-a-a," until he reached a door beneath which shone a crack of light. Here he remained reflectively for some time, on all fours. Then, butting his head against the door, he pushed it open with his nose. To his great surprise a fat man, in shirt-sleeves and eye-shade, was sitting at his desk, before a huge pile of blue-books. The fat man looked up good-naturedly and nodded.

"Good evening," he said in an ordinary conversational tone. "How do you do?"

It was the dean of Harvard College. Simon recognized, although he did not know, him. Anyhow, it made no difference to Simon. "All men are created equal."

"Good evening, Dean," said he. "I am very, very tired."

The dean regarded him searchingly.

"I should say that you were very, very drunk!" he replied. "Come in and lie down on my sofa for a while."

Although Simon knew this for error, he was not offended. The fat man—even if he were a dean—seemed like a good fellow, and he decided to accept his invitation.

"The sofa is over here," explained the dean. "Rather a rough night?"

"'S always fair weather when goo' fellows get together!" answered Simon politely. "Jus' tired!" he murmured as with care he adjusted his legs upon the sofa. It was hospitable of the dean, but then—all men were equal! The dean must know that,—if not, he must be enlightened.

"For what you think I am," sang Simon informatively, "I don't give a damn!

> "For I'm a Kapper Lamb!—Yes, I am!—
> Ba-a! Ba-a! Ba-a!
> Ye-ow!"

Then he passed out entirely.

§ 6

"All I mean to ask," explained the dean, as a couple of weeks later they sat at lunch in the Colonial Club, "is what are you really getting out of it? Marks aren't everything. Harvard has a lot to offer besides degrees. I've been over your record with some care. From the point of view of scholarship, it's more than creditable. But your courses have all been along the line of history

and economics. You've not taken a single 'snap' except 'English Elocution'—and I'm not sure that hasn't done more for you than all the rest put together!"

Simon grinned. He was fully at his ease with this genial Saint Peter who had been a classmate of his father's and who now displayed such a friendly interest in himself.

The dean continued:

"You ought to broaden out—take some English literature, fine arts, and modern languages—music even. How about a course in eighteenth-century drama? Do you ever go to the theatre?—It's an outrage that you never went out for the crew!—You ought to mix more!"—"And eat more!" he added to himself as he watched the eagerness with which Simon attacked the much-criticised bill of fare. "Take your degree in three years if you want to, but why not stay on, graduate with your class, have as good a time as you can, and take things a little less seriously? Your Kappa Lambda friends are good fellows, but they are cut more or less out of the same piece of cloth. I don't think you've given yourself half a chance.—You ought to know some girls and go to the 'assemblies.' 'All work,' you know, doesn't pay! If you are hard-up I can easily throw enough tutoring in your way to remedy that. You ought not to leave Cambridge without closer contact with some of our really big men.—Have a cigarette?—What are you going to do after you leave college?"

"We-ell," hesitated Simon, "I really don't know, but I'm fairly good at economics and I kind of thought I might land a teaching job."

"Do you want to teach?"

"Not particularly."

"Then why do you select education as your life work?"

"We-ell," Simon hesitated again, "I don't know, but most of the fellows in Kappa Lambda——"

"Most of your Copper Lambs would sell their birthright for any job to net 'em two thousand a year!" ejaculated the dean. "You've got more in you than that. I happened to drop into Sanders Theatre the night you spoke there—before you honored me with your presence at my room in Stoughton—and it was splendid."

"The judges didn't seem to think so," retorted Simon.

"O, that's nothing! You were too emotional! It embarrassed them. You've got real histrionic ability and a truly fine voice. You might become a forensic orator. Anyhow, don't neglect an asset like that!—Sure! Come to see me any time. How about dining at 'The Tavern' and taking in Sara Bernhardt next Saturday night?"

Simon confided all this to Otto, who listened with a sceptical wrinkle across his low, freckled forehead.

"I'd take it with a grain of salt," said he distrustfully. "Maybe the dean is all right, but what's the use wasting a year sitting in your pants? It's all right to talk about 'culture' when you've got a fat job like his. What good is fine arts going to do in earning your living? Modern languages I can see,—but what use is Beaumont and Fletcher? You might as well take music and be done with it."

"He suggested music!"

"O, my God!—How much is the lunch?—Forty cents? I thought eggs were ten apiece."

"But we had coffee and bread-and-butter," said Simon. "Match you for it?"

"All samee," said Otto after he had lost. "So far as I'm concerned, a year is a year, and I don't see anything in dawdling around here after you've got your degree, trying to imitate Oscar Wilde. I don't take any stock in

intellectual sunflowers! As for the purely social stuff—it's all silly nonsense! That's the whole point of the Lambs. We stand for something better. He'll be running you for 'the Dicky' next! I'm surprised he didn't offer to get you into the Porcellian!—He's one of those Boston fellows himself! Come on back and get to work. I got a dandy summary of old Gookin's lecture on 'The Holy Alliance.'"

"No, my downfall's going to begin with a game of tennis on Soldiers' Field," said Simon, as they climbed the stairs to their room in Stoughton. "I'm going to put my *mens sana* in a first-class *corpore sano*. I used to own a racket but I haven't laid eyes on it for a couple of years."

"I saw one in the closet, behind a pile of old shoes," answered Otto.

Simon disappeared into the dusty darkness and began hurling forth its unconsidered contents. Among the larger objects thus disentombed was an ancient valise, which he recognized as containing his grandfather's neglected manuscript.

"What you got there?" inquired Otto, as Simon took it out, wiped it off, and, throwing himself into the window-seat, began to read.

"That is Grandpa Kent's *magnum opus*—'The History of Human Liberty.'"

"He certainly was a grand writer!" Otto studied the fine hand with genuine admiration. "Did he ever publish it?"

"No. It isn't finished. It's mostly historical. Gosh, but the old boy must have read a lot!"

"I'd like to take a whack at it when you're through," said Otto, seating himself in the other embrasure, with his notes.

"Say," interrupted Simon, half an hour later, "Did you ever hear of Papinian or Ulpian or Bartolus or Grotius or Pothier or Savigny?"

"No—who were they?"

"A little bunch of serious thinkers," replied Simon. "I can see where I've got a year or two of hard grind catching up with where grandfather left off. I'm supposed to be going to finish it some day."

"You better start right now!" advised his friend. "If you work twenty-two hours a day you might get through the first volume ten years from now."

Simon continued to read all that afternoon, and when he had finished the manuscript, turned it over to Otto, who devoured it until nearly midnight.

"Gosh but that's great stuff!" the latter exclaimed as he threw the heavy pile on the centre-table. "You've got your job cut out for you, Red! It's a grand idea! If I was you I'd start a cross-index system and keep it absolutely up to date as you go along.—One thing I notice, though! The old boy was bugs on trades-unionism. He writes as if it was some new thing that had to be explained and defended. He's fifty years behind the times!

"You've got a great chance, Red! I don't know of any book that really analyzes the origin of the idea of liberty. Your grandfather doesn't compare or contrast the English or common-law idea of liberty with Rousseau's 'rights of man,' for example. He doesn't attempt to discuss how far rights of property are involved in a true conception of liberty—or rights of contract. He doesn't trace our idea of liberty to its source—if it has a source. He doesn't show whether it's Greek or Roman or German. Get me?—Have I got an idea or haven't I?"

He tugged at the lock of black hair that hung over his broad, semi-Mongolian features.

"God forbid that I should deny it!" declared Simon. "Maybe you have. Rave on!"

"Or the influence of religious ideas!—Take Puritanism, for instance. Martin Luther must have had a hell of an influence on the prevailing conception of liberty!—Whereas—Christ, none at all!—Say! And—O, my! how about fellows like Kant?"

"Why don't *you* write the book?" inquired his roommate.

"I'd like to!—What you've got to do is to rewrite the whole thing from a broader angle, eliminate its bias and all that stuff about trades-unionism, bring it down to date, and——"

"And evolve a new and original concept of the meaning of liberty!" finished Simon.

"That's about the size of it!"

They stood looking at one another while a bell on some distant tower tolled the hour of twelve.

"I can see how quite a lot could be written about the effect of the French Revolution and the spread of republican ideas throughout Europe during the middle of the last century," pondered Simon. "All that '48 stuff."

"—And things like Darwinism."

"—Or the Monroe Doctrine!"

They sagely discussed the bearing of the latter upon the subject of human liberty in its broadest sense.

"Tell you what!" announced Simon at last. "I've most got a mind to take my last year here and make a beginning on it. I could get a good start and maybe use some of the stuff for an M.A.——"

"Fine!" assented Otto. "And cut out all the sun-

flowers and symphony concerts. I don't want you to turn into a

> "'Niminy-piminy
> Francesca da Rimini
> *Je ne sais quoi* young man!'"

§ 7

Simon was no swan, although he was a husky and—when he was shaved—rather good-looking young man.

"Why didn't you come out and try for the crew in your freshman year?" snorted the coach angrily, as he watched the powerful swing of Simon's torso. "You've let yourself go all to pot! Still—in three months—I may be able to do something with you.—Suck in your gut!"

In point of fact Simon had very little "gut" to "suck in," and the change from the thin diet at "Foxcroft" to the amplitude of the training-table added twenty-two pounds to his weight. He was surprised at his own strength, still more so at the friendliness with which he was received. With his degree solidly nailed down, he cut his working-day to seven hours, slept himself out, and began to feel "like a million dollars."—An entirely new Simon "sat up and took notice."

He discovered how biassed and discolored had been Mose Lufkin's picture of his classmates' attitude. So far as Simon could see, it was totally unjustified and there was nothing snobbish about them whatever. They were just natural, easy-going fellows who ragged each other a lot and never gave a moment's thought to the social status or financial condition of those with whom they came in contact. In the genial atmosphere in which he now moved his native amiability expanded, although he was still inclined to be argumentative and slightly can-

tankerous, apt to do gracious things in an ungracious way. Pride kept him faithful to the Lambs,—even after he made the crew.

They had been good enough for him up to that time and they were good enough still. But he made many new friends—almost as many as if he had joined one of the final clubs—including the polo-playing Hungerfords, who turned out to be unassuming young men, quite different from what he had been led to suppose. Crossing the yard at this time, in company with Nick Holden, the captain of the crew, he met Davis Pettibone for the first time in three years.

"Hello!" cried Davis cordially. "How are you?"

"Fine and dandy," replied Simon.

"Glad to have you drop in and see me sometime," continued Pettibone, remembering too late that he had once before participated in a precisely similar conversation.

"Where do you live?" asked Simon with significance.

"Claverly."

Simon coolly looked him over.

"Thanks!" said he, and passed on.

§ 8

In his class biography it is recorded of Simon that he not only rowed on the class crew in his junior year but also was one of the famous eight which won the great race against Yale at New London the following spring, by fifteen seconds. Of minor interest are the statements that he won the Boylston Prize-Speaking, in his senior year; was chosen a member of Phi Beta Kappa; took his A.B. in three years; an A.M. the year after; and was a member of the Psi Chapter of the Kappa Lambda Fraternity. It does not mention his having refused election

to the Griffin's Head, the Gamma Phi, The Basilisk, or The Chow, nor does it advert to his love-affair with Phyllis Onderdonk, whom he met at one of the rehearsals of the Cambridge Dramatic Club during his sole appearance as Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

In point of fact, he most agreeably followed out the plan formulated by the dean; made a preliminary survey of human liberty, and, having pulled down an A.B. *summa cum laude* in political science, turned himself loose in the clover-field of arts and literature, kicking his heels like a colt as he rolled on his back among the poets and dramatists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

"I recant!" he said to his friend, the dean. "For what you think I am I certainly do give a damn!"

His thesis on "Modern Concepts of Old Abstractions," which won him his A.M., was later printed in *The Atlantic Monthly*. He went to the theatre, attended the symphony concerts, acted as a "super" for a reckless fortnight during the opera season, and generally so enjoyed himself that, had not the rest of the "Copper Lambs" fully recognized his social importance to the club as a member of the 'Varsity, they would certainly have treated him like a black sheep.

The climax of this year of gauds and glory was naturally the victory at New London, at the conclusion of which he and his associates returned to Cambridge to be cheered, pounded, and marched in triumph around the yard. They were dragged within sacred portals and plied with wine; distinguished men begged to introduce themselves and asked permission to introduce their sons; the world—at least all of it within a mile or so of Harvard Square—was theirs! During this period of physical and spiritual exaltation Simon attended numberless "re-

unions" and "spreads," was given his A.B. and M.A. degrees, received several thousand slaps upon the back from alcoholic graduates—and speedily concluded that there was nothing in it. Especially could he not get rid of the Lambs, who surrounded him wherever he went. "Damn little snobs!" he decided.—"This is all right, but it won't get me a job next autumn."

Weary of stale adulation, he shook off the Lambs by slipping into the crowd at Sanders Theatre. A placard announced that the Honorable Martin P. Judah, under the auspices of the Harvard Law School Alumni Association, would speak upon "The Legal Career." If only for the sake of sitting down unmolested Simon would have gone anywhere and listened to anything. Nobody could pester him in there, no matter how rotten the show might turn out to be!

It was a chatty, friendly crowd, and during the preliminaries Simon dozed off against a balcony pillar. He awoke when the president of the association introduced the speaker, a smooth-cheeked man with finely chiselled Norman features under a shock of waving black curls that, once the orator went into action, stood up like the plume on a Roman helmet. But it was not the glowing eyes of Martin Judah, or even the mellifluousness of his voice that hypnotized Simon;—it was his extreme youth.

"Gosh!" he thought. "Can this kid be a leader of the Illinois bar? How d'you s'pose he ever did it? He doesn't look much over thirty-five!"

Then Martin Judah, speaking solely to and directly at Simon, took him gently by the hand and soared with him to dizzy heights. The world lay spread out below them, a world in which was raging a dire conflict between the forces of capital and labor, of idealism and of selfishness, of stability and of anarchy. It was the lawyer's

task to bring order out of this chaos, so that peace should spread its white wings over the earth, so that factories should hum and the waterways be crowded with great ships, that man might enjoy the fruits of his labor without fear of molestation either from kings or from corrupt governments.

We lived in a universe of immutable laws that held the planets in their places and ordered sunrise and sunset, winter and summer, seed-time and harvest. Human progress—civilization in its highest form—could never be achieved until the activities of men and their relations one to another were similarly governed and stabilized. The pursuit of legal science was the greatest, the noblest of all professions, upon which all others ultimately depended.

In that moment Simon's future was determined. He resolved to dedicate his life to Truth, Reason, and Justice—through the medium of the legal career.

That summer he took a tutoring job at Northeast Harbor, Maine, while Otto, in partnership with a young Polish Jew who lived on the same entry of Stoughton, ran a filling-station on the Newburyport Turnpike.

§ 9

A solemn little girl sat hunched with her chin on her knees on the other side of the camp-fire, regarding Simon with brown inquiring eyes.

"And then what?" she asked eagerly.

Simon changed the pan in which he was frying bacon from one hand to the other.

"O, sometime I guess I'd like to be a judge, maybe.—Come on now! Get your plates! Bacon's ready."

He had found his job of tutoring young Garrick Brad-

ley a delightful sinecure, and, since Mrs. Bradley was averse to violent exercise, Garrick's small sister, Vira, together with her collie "White Chief," her airedale "Pat," and her Maltese terrier "Toby," usually participated in their sports and joined them on their excursions. It was by long odds the pleasantest summer Simon could remember, for he loved out-of-door life, and when they were not sailing, playing tennis, or following the mountain trails, they built camp-fires, and picnicked on the shore.

The Bradleys lived in a simple, old-fashioned bungalow on School House Hill, surrounded by sunny ledges overgrown with juniper, sheep laurel, and blueberry bushes, and from the verandas one could see a goodly proportion of the Maine coast, from Petit Menan to Isle aû Haute. Mrs. Bradley, who was wealthy, the widow of a retired Columbia professor, had been, in the first instance, impressed by what the dean had told her of Simon's qualifications as a tutor, but she had found them so far in excess of her expectations, and had taken such a fancy to Simon himself, that she had re-engaged his services for the three successive summers following his graduation. Thus, during his first two years at the Law School, Simon passed his vacations with the Bradleys on Mount Desert, and he came to look upon the boy and girl almost as a younger brother and sister.

Lying beside their crackling camp-fire while the tide lapped the green stones on the shore of Somes' Sound, or sprawling, pipe in mouth, in the cockpit of the *Cyrrus*, their thirty-footer, Simon was in a position to exert an influence on romantic and susceptible young minds, that some parents might have regarded as fraught with dangerous possibilities. To Garrick and Vira this six-foot member of the winning Harvard crew was like a

freckled god descended from Olympus,—their personal private hero, whom they jealously guarded. That he had been a waiter, a night clerk in a hotel, made him all the more wonderful, his apotheosis the more exciting. They ran after him like little dogs, Vira, especially, hanging on his every word.

"Tell me some more!—And then what?" were her favorite phrases.

Simon was much improved in every way over his earlier state, by his last year of expansion. He now weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, stood much straighter than formerly, and had a fine healthy color. Generally speaking, he used less slang and much less profanity than theretofore, judging it to be his duty to set an example of refinement and elegance in speech. Mrs. Bradley thought that she had "never heard a lovelier speaking voice," but for some strange reason he never used it at her lunch parties. To the lonely little Vira he was the most magnificent, the wisest, and kindest person she had ever seen, and once, when she twisted her ankle and he carried her a mile down Cedar Swamp Mountain, she had, for at least three days, refused to wash the place where his cheek had occasionally touched hers.

Simon, unaware of the feelings which he inspired and mindful of the difference in age and station, fanned the flame by his detachment. How could he know that she kept under her pillow the twisted root looking exactly like a "V" which he had found and given her? that she remembered him nightly in her prayers, along with her father and mother, brother Garry, "White Chief," "Pat," and "Toby"? And what could he have done if he had known it? To Simon she was only a nice "kid" that was always saying:

"Tell me some more!—And then what?" And who pondered gravely what he said.

§ 10

Simon's three years at the Law School were a brainstorm of cases, wet towels, late hours, frenzied argument over moot questions. His enthusiasm had infected Otto, who, having likewise determined to become a jurist, displayed an ability for legal analysis both unsuspected and phenomenal. The training which they had received during their period of "greasy grinding" now proved invaluable; competition was keen; there was no loafing; and even the most notorious "sports," once they had enrolled, took off their coats and "boned." Among these was Davis Pettibone, who had staged an astonishing "come-back" and, physically, was but a shadow of his former self.

For some reason he appeared to have taken a distinct "shine" to both Simon and Otto, who, as he showed a marked disposition to repent him of his former ways, at first tolerated and presently began to like him. With most of the fat removed, Davis was now quite a presentable person and he quickly adapted his habits of speech and deportment to the requirements of his new environment. They realized in a way that they were a help to him in his work, but in helping Davis they found that they also helped themselves and, after all, as Simon pointed out, they were old friends and he owed Davis something, after having punched his nose so many times at Smith & Horton's fifteen years before.

They labored with an almost inconceivable fury of enthusiasm, digesting cases and making summaries of the law of torts, agency, contracts, sales, and real prop-

erty. They joined the "Pow Wow" and spent weeks in voluntary preparation for mock trials and the discussion of moot questions upon appeal, and they acquired such legal subtlety that they frequently tied up their courses for a full half-hour while they argued with their no less ingenious professors. They worked for and were in due course elected to the board of editors of the *Harvard Law Review*, of which Simon became in his last year editor-in-chief.

They sat at the feet of wise men; their friends and comrades princes of the mind royal; happy—gloriously, drunkenly happy—in a complete and intoxicating intellectual absorption. Then the iron heel of war crashed through their scholastic dreams. A week after receiving his degree, Simon was in Plattsburg.

CHAPTER IV

§ 1

John H. Robinson was, so far as can be definitely ascertained, the last eminent New York attorney to wear a tall silk hat and mutton-chop side-whiskers, but he was known throughout the length and breadth of the land as The Friend of Young Men. He looked a cross between a banker, an actor, and a sexton; and he had a broadcloth-covered paunch and liver spots. Further than this he was legally unimportant. Twice yearly—at Christmas and at Easter—there congregated in his high-ceiled Wall Street office a cloud of anxious and diffident undergraduate law students who wished to attain fame and fortune in the Great Metropolis as expeditiously as possible, if not sooner; and twice yearly did the Old Man of the Law expound unto them the simple doctrines of his own success.

Like most embryonic and promising future jurists, Simon, Otto, and Davis Pettibone had sought and secured letters of introduction to him, upon their graduation from the law school in the spring of 1917. These letters of credit, although two years old, not having yet been cashed upon the bank of wisdom, were still good; and it was by virtue of them that the three now found themselves ranged, with others similarly situated, against the wall of Mr. Robinson's private office.

"Come right in, gentlemen!—Come right in! You'll find seats over there in the corner by the window!" he said in a voice resonant with cheer, and rubbing his hands

in the familiar manner of a stage-curate. "I am delighted to see you all. You must excuse my inability to address you individually by name.—Yes, you may close the door, now that the last one has come in.—So many of you have paid me the compliment of seeking my advice that, purely for economy of time, I have invited you here this afternoon all together. Well, first let me extend to you a hearty welcome to New York, the great city of opportunity."

There was no doubting Mr. Robinson's sincerity and friendliness so far as his neophytes were concerned. He really wished to be of help to them. He might even have gone so far as to invite some of them to lunch or dinner.

"The Law," impressively announced Mr. Robinson, "is the noblest of all professions. And that, of course, is the reason why you have chosen it. Among its leaders have been many of the greatest men of all time." He waved toward the walls, from which gazed severely down upon them the graven lineaments of Lords Russell and Eldon, Chief Justice Marshall, Chief Justice Shaw, and, less austerely, those of Justice William H. Taft. "They are our inspiration. No young man should go into the law who does not earnestly intend to maintain their standards. It is, I may say, a sacred calling,—and not one to be lightly entered into. The law, in spite of its spiritual satisfactions, is no primrose path of dalliance. Rather it is a steep and narrow way, demanding constant effort, self-sacrifice, and unremitting industry."

Mr. Robinson's voice sank. For the moment he seemed plunged in depression, as he regarded, in retrospect, the terrible sacrifices involved in his own struggle upward.

"Ours," he repeated reverently, "is, as I say, a sacred calling,—we are all of us priests in the Temple of the Law!"

"Aw, cut it out!" breathed Otto from behind his hat. Simon crunched his toe.

"Give the old guy a chance!" he growled.

But Mr. Robinson saw only a group of politely attentive young men as for the next fifteen minutes he delivered his semiannual address on the glories of his profession.

"But," continued Mr. Robinson, brightening, "the law has material compensations as well as spiritual. Beside the consciousness of public service, of maintaining the highest standards of business and social morality, of setting an example of good citizenship, the lawyer—provided he is willing to work and to keep sober—can look forward to financial rewards unequalled in any other profession. There is no public office to which the lawyer may not aspire, no society however distinguished that he may not enter, no high-salaried business or financial position to which he will not find the law a stepping-stone."

He paused and moistened his lips.

"And now for a word or two of practical advice. Whatever we may say, we all want money,—not necessarily for what it can buy, although that is by no means to be despised, but as a concrete evidence of our success. To make money you must have clients. You must not only get them, but you must keep them! The only way you can do that is by service, and that depends on hard work. But the getting of clients—of good—and by 'good' I mean wealthy—clients—is a different matter. Most of you are strangers here. At first it will doubtless seem a hopeless proposition. 'How can I ever bring myself to the attention of worth-while people who will give me cases?' every young lawyer will inevitably ask himself. Well, there is where I can help you. Don't be dis-

couraged. Every one of us—no matter how successful later on—has been through the same period of early depression. Follow a few simple rules that I shall lay down for you and you will be astonished at the amount of business that will come your way. There are to-day men at the bar who make a million a year!"

"That's me!" whispered Simon.

"First, don't drink, use profanity, or wear dirty linen. Be as elegant as you can, so as to impress others with your refinement and social standing. Don't be afraid to spend money on your clothes."

"'Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,'—what ho, Polonius!" muttered Simon.

"Take every opportunity to meet influential people, and follow it up. Young men—of the right sort—are always in demand. Attend a first-class church—the denomination is of no importance—on Fifth Avenue or near it. Get to know the minister, teach a class in the Sunday-school, join the young people's clubs, the local Y. M. C. A., the Knights of Columbus—all the activities that will give you social contacts. Make yourselves agreeable, especially to elderly ladies. You never can tell what an old woman will do. Go out to dinner. Be in evidence. Mix. Have a good story to tell. Join a lodge,—Holland Lodge, if possible. Don't be stingy, but be sure your money is getting you somewhere.

"Meanwhile, of course, you will have become a clerk in some good law firm,—here or elsewhere,—Mr. Canthus, the head of our personnel department, will help you there. But don't stay too long working for anybody else. Get out for yourselves, so that the fees you earn will belong to you. Organize a firm of your own. If you are a Christian, select a Hebrew and an Irishman—a Roman Catholic—for your partners. If you are a Jewish young

man,—do the same! Choose some Christian—an Episcopalian or Presbyterian preferably—and a rising young member of Tammany Hall as your associates. Have your lines out in every direction. Go into politics, whether you like it or not, and work hard for one of the regular organizations. That is one of the most profitable sources of practice, and may even in time lead to a place on the bench, if—when it comes—you can afford to take it. Contribute to the campaign funds. Get out at election time and make speeches. Be on the right side of things. Join the National Guard—Squadron A, or the Seventh Regiment. Avoid bad company. Keep away from socialists and laborites or any kind of connection that will get people down on you. Don't write poetry, or love-stories, or play on musical instruments, or go in for amateur acting, or do too much dancing. Give the impression of being serious-minded young men who are devoted to your profession, who desire to maintain its standards and have the welfare of the country at heart!"

"And one other thing!" added Mr. Robinson. "Keep away from women—I mean bad women! Remember that marriage is a holy institution and one into which it is your duty to enter in due time. But don't be in a hurry about it. Many a promising young lawyer has ruined his career by marrying some doll-faced girl he wouldn't have looked at ten years later. Take your time. These next few years are the ones in which you should be working hard at your profession and enlarging your acquaintance. You'll want your evenings to study in and go out into society, and you won't be able to do either if you have to sit at home and amuse a wife or take care of the baby. If you're going to do that you'll never get any clients and you might just as well hang out your shingle in Podunk or Pugwash. Wait. Go easy. Get on your

feet. Accumulate a bank-account. Look about you. And when the right opportunity offers, pick out a girl who's a lady, whose people have social position and can help you, and, if possible, one who has some money. It's as easy at the start to love a rich girl as a poor one,—and a heap easier later on. There's lots of truth in the adage: 'Don't marry a girl for money, but if you can find a girl with money, try to love her.' You'll be able to do a great deal better in ten years than you are now. You'll know more, and be earning more, and have more to offer. I can't insist too strongly on this point! Marriage may make or break you. It has more to do with a man's success or failure than any other single factor, not excepting his professional ability. Pick out a woman who will push you, who knows how to entertain and make up to people. Remember that looks are only skin-deep, even if 'that is deep enough for most men.' Find a real helpmate,—not some one who'll be a millstone around your neck. And don't forget that to most women any man is a potential husband and that every single one of them is crazy to get married. So don't be too shy about it when the time comes. Fathers are glad enough to have a son-in-law who hasn't got something the matter with him. A healthy young fellow of good habits, unless he's a moron, can marry anybody. Especially after this war. Look at the daughters of rich men who every day marry fellows who haven't got a cent to their names,—daughters of bank presidents and big railroad men. And, of course, you'll eventually get their business."

Mr. Robinson arose and the others shambled to their feet.

"And now I can only shake hands with each one of you," said he heartily, "and express the hope that you

may all attain the very greatest success.—Good afternoon—and may good luck go with you!" he added as if in benediction, moving to the door and presenting his hand to each of them as they passed out.

"Well," said Davis, as they were discharged from the elevator and paused in front of the cigar-stand in the lobby, "I guess that's the right dope. I'd like to get into that office.—Shall you go to see Canthus?"

Otto turned on him. There was a touch of red in his swart cheeks.

"I should say not! I thought it was all simply disgusting! The law isn't just a business! That old hypocrite has got no more ideals than a chipmunk."

Simon threw a quarter on the cigar-counter.

"Give me three 'domestics'," he said airily. "I'm going to follow old Polonius' advice not to be stingy. Let's hurry up and join the Knights of Columbus or the B'nai Brith Abraham—or it may be too late. Perhaps we might make up to some rich old woman, on the way. Old Mutton Chops was commercial, of course, but I don't think he was a hypocrite. I think he meant it.—Only he's got the wrong idea!"

§ 2

Nevertheless, it was into the flaming belly of that legal Moloch known as "Robinson, Myer & Burr" that fate cast Simon Kent. In spite of Otto's vituperation and his own derision for "Old Polonius," the fact remained that the firm was concededly one of the greatest law factories east of the Mississippi and turned out more generally capable all-round practitioners than any other three similar establishments put together.

"What if they do bally-hoo a little? Everybody has

to advertise one way or another! They've got the right dope and all the old fossils know it. When you come right down to brass tacks pretty near everything Mutton Chops said was true. You've got to hustle in any line of business to get along in this world," reasserted Davis as they sat smoking after dinner at Mrs. McGowan's lodging-house on University Place.

He got up, unhooked a wisp-broom from beside the door, and carefully brushed the shoulders of his dark-blue sack-coat. Simon watched him, not without approval, for in view of his original corpulence Davis had developed into an unexpectedly prepossessing person,—six-feet of stalwart clear-skinned, gentle-eyed plumpness.

"'Rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,'"

he quoted. "What did that lovely suit stand you in, Davie?"

"One hundred and fifty bucks,—at Erdman & Erdman's."

"That's where you got your flossy little major's uniform, wasn't it? Too bad you can't wear it any longer."

The taunt was an amiable reference to the fact that Davis had been content to serve his country in a swivel chair as an "M. I. D." officer in New York, instead of going to Plattsburg and afterwards to France with the "A. E. F."

Insults, however, bounded off Davis like tennis-balls. He now re-parted his sleek black hair with a pocket-comb, peered in the glass, and, being apparently satisfied after a careful inspection, reached for his hat.

"Mutton Chops is dead right about the 'Janes,' too," he remarked. "A fellow can't afford to get tied up with a woman at this stage in the game. Falling in love is one

thing and marriage is another. And, as he said, when you come to pick a wife there are a lot of things to consider.—'Love 'em and leave 'em' is my motto. I want to make a million dollars and I intend to have a hell of a good time doing it!—To-morrow I'm going to hit 'our Mr. Canthus' for a job."

"Old Davie'll be as hard-boiled as any of 'em by the time he's thirty!" prophesied Simon as Pettibone departed.

"He is already!" declared Otto. "If I thought practice was like that, I'd go into teaching!"

He faced Simon, his big shock head swaying between his stocky shoulders, like a bull's.

"Don't let them get you!" he pleaded. "You're just the sort of fellow they're after. They wouldn't want a sawed-off little black runt like me, at any price. Any client that saw me would run a mile.—But there aren't many fellows like you, Simon. They'll try to grab you right off the bat! I know! They'll make you all sorts of offers.—Don't fall for them, Simon! What's the use wallowing twenty months in that hog-wash over there 'to make the world safe for democracy'—and then letting everything slide?"

"I'm not going to let anything slide," said Simon. "Robinson's guff made me sick. He's a thoroughly commercialized second-class old egg. His ideas are just about a hundred years behind the times, but—his firm is one of the biggest in town and, after all, we've got to make a living."

§ 3

Otto's prophecy proved correct. Robinson, Myer & Burr grabbed Simon and grabbed him hard. Mr.

Canthus, gray, shrewd, coolly efficient, and wholly heartless, after asking Davis a few general questions, dismissed him with a vague assurance that his application would receive attention and that he possibly might hear from the firm later on. Then, running his eye over Simon, he said:

"What sort of law do you eventually want to practise?"

"I don't know. I never thought much about it. Any kind that's respectable, I guess.—General practice,—isn't that what they call it?"

"Your letters say that you received an 'A' for the course at the Harvard Law School and that you were chief editor of the *Law Review?*"

"Yes—during my last year."

Mr. Canthus nodded, as if he understood all that.

"And were two years in France.—What branch of the service?"

"Artillery."

"Are you married?"

Simon, in recollection of "Old Polonius," grinned at him.

"Not disabled!"

Mr. Canthus did not grin in response. Instead he remarked coldly:

"We have turned down sixty-nine applications this week,—but wait here a minute."

Simon fumbled his hat for some ten minutes. The reception-hall in which he sat was more like the lobby of a hotel than what he had imagined a law office to be. All sorts of people came in, stepped up to a desk, registered, —"checked in" or "out." Occasionally some one would call "Boy!" much as a room clerk might shout "Front!" A money-changer did an active banking business in a

wire cage. Files of young men, bearing wire baskets piled high with papers, stalked back and forth on the horizon like caravans of laden camels. Rows of closed doors receded into silent corridors out of which hurried young women with note-books and paper cuffs. There was a subdued distant hum, as from a prodigious swarm of flies or a myriad of electric fans. Yet no fans, flies, or even typewriters were visible.

Sitting there, Simon suffered an emotional relapse. Obviously, if employed by Robinson, Myer & Burr, one's relationship to the firm would be about as personal as that enjoyed by a private with the major-general in command. They'd give him a number, probably! "Boy 179."

Mr. Canthus returned.

"Come with me, if you please."

Simon followed him down a half-mile of antiseptic corridor carpeted in green Wilton, turned left, then right, and entered a large square room looking into a sunless interior court, lined with olive tin filing-cases and filled with cigar smoke. A stocky man, with a clipped gray mustache and a thick nose having a small drop of white flesh dependent between the nostrils, was signing something for a waiting secretary.

"There you are!" he said, allowing the secretary to blot his signature. "Mr. Kent?—I'm Mr. Myer—Sit down. You want a place in this office—eh? What has been your experience?" Mr. Myer had the highly upsetting habit of punctuating all his remarks—whether interrogative, expository, hortatory, or denunciative—with frequent "Ehs," "Huhs," and "Heys"—an idiosyncrasy which embarrassed Simon, until he perceived that it was without significance. He had a face like an alligator-skin bag and a voice like a baseball coach.

Vocally versatile, he normally contented himself with a loud and terrifying bark, yet he could at will yammer like a motor-horn or tune in on the nearest steam riveting-machine and smother it. He was the vitalizing force of Robinson, Myer & Burr, with an inexhaustible dynamic energy and the technique of a pile-driver,—an old-fashioned brow-beater. Juries admired him as "slick," taking the same savage delight in seeing him tear the entrails out of a helpless witness as had the populace of ancient Rome in the barbarities of the Colosseum.

"We need a man in the trial end—huh," said Mr. Myer, at the end of fifteen minutes. "I do most of the heavy work myself, but Mr. Avery, who usually assists me and prepares the cases,—huh—has just had a nervous break-down and we have got to try a new shuffle—. Have you ever tried jury cases?"

"I've never tried anything," answered Simon.

"You wouldn't for some time,—huh? Frankly, it will be a gamble, but you seem to have certain requisites—eh? Most *Law Review* men want to start right in arguing appeals before the Supreme Court. If you want to begin as a sort of 'omnibus' in our accident department, we'll take you on six months' trial, and then fire you or shove you into court."

"Thank you very much," replied Simon. "I'll do my best, but, frankly, I don't exactly see why you think I could try cases."

Mr. Myer flipped the card lying on the desk in front of him in Simon's direction.

"I rely a great deal on Mr. Canthus' judgment. He was ten years personnel man of the Pennsylvania Railroad. There's what he thinks of you."

Simon read:

"Kent, Simon. A.B. Harv. '14. LL.B. Harv. Law

Sch. '17. 'A.' Ed. *Law Review.* Served two years in France. American, tall, neat, unassuming, fine voice, rather shy, but has sense of humor and quick come-back. Promising."

Simon felt himself growing red. Mr. Myer arose and clapped him on the shoulder.

"You'll get over that!" he smiled. "You haven't asked what you'll be paid."

"I don't much care."

"Then we'll give you fifty dollars a week, for the start. If you're not worth that to us—you're not worth anything! Report to me personally to-morrow morning."

It was so much more than Simon had expected to receive, that it left him dazed.

§ 4

The law firm of Robinson, Myer & Burr occupies two entire stories in a white-stone office building midway on Wall Street. It has ten full-fledged partners who receive a certain percentage of the profits, and sixteen others whose names appear upon its letter-head but who are paid regular salaries, twenty law clerks, forty stenographers, fifteen accountants, fourteen office boys, four telephone-operators, and a miscellaneous group consisting of detective process-servers, a translator, a real-estate expert, an architectural draftsman, and a librarian. Its overhead is somewhere in the neighborhood of a half-million dollars per year. It has a corporation department, an income-tax department, a probate department, a patent-law department, a personal-injuries department, a divorce department, and an entertainment fund. It is equally ready to sue for damages in your behalf if you slip on a banana-peel or to establish your

claim to the throne of Siam. It will undertake anything, from helping to float a bond issue to securing an injunction to prevent repairs from being made upon the White House. It has correspondents in every city in the world and in every town in the United States, its name is printed in double Titanic in all the legal directories, and it numbers among its clients present and prospective foreign governments, defunct royal families, transcontinental railroad systems, banks, trust companies, and moving-picture concerns. It is no respecter of persons, has no bowels or mercies. It will stake you, break you, collect your alimony, buy your steamship tickets, or get you properly hanged—all in the day's work, and its right hand knoweth not what its left hand doeth. There is no great litigation in which it is not represented, its cases appear daily upon every calendar, from the Yorkville Police Court to the Supreme Court of the United States. Its filing-system equals that of Sears-Roebuck, its library rivals that of the Bar Association. It prints all its papers. One of its partners is a member of the Republican National Committee, another of the Democratic, a third is a sachem of Tammany Hall, and still another is the second-best golf-player at Palm Beach. It has collected single fees of over a million dollars, and holds blocks of stock and of bonds in some of the largest corporations in the country.

Nothing ever goes by default with Robinson, Myer & Burr. They never sleep. The lights burn in the library and stenographic bureau throughout the night. Lunches are brought in on trays to the rooms of the partners, who come early, stay late, and die young. Their charges for ordinary matters are moderate, compared with other firms, for theirs is mass production, but when they get the right chance to stick a client, they take all that he

has. Old-fashioned attorneys regard Robinson, Myer & Burr with irritation, but treat them with respect. Every autumn ten thousand notices, engraved upon the costliest Tiffany stationery, flood the mails, announcing that "Mr. John J. Smith (or whosoever) has this day become a member of our firm," and not a week passes but the press reports that Honorable John Henry Robinson, of the well-known Wall Street law firm of Robinson, Myer & Burr, in addressing the Boost Club, the Jugo-Slavic Society, the Foreign Policy Association, the Kiwanis, the Elks, or the Rotarians at their annual banquet, held last evening at the Waldorf, said thus and so.

The three title members of the firm are merely expert publicity men who devote themselves to pulling in the business; the remainder of the partners are thoroughgoing lawyers who do the work. They do it well; as well, indeed, as it can be done, and most of them are scholarly, high-minded gentlemen, who cringe at the antics of their masters, but who, for financial reasons, cannot afford to sever their connection. New York is full of such lawyers. Nobody ever hears of them, for they sit in secluded offices looking up the law, preparing briefs and drafting papers which are later signed by the John Henry Robinsons of the bar. They are known only to the clients of the firm, to their professional associates, to the judges upon the bench, to the members of the law committees upon which they serve, and to their Father in Heaven.

For the next six months Simon lived in a cyclone of calendar calls, depositions, subpœnas, orders to show cause, motions to adjourn and to dismiss and for new trials. He interviewed bandaged victims in hospital wards, policemen, motormen, chauffeurs, truck-drivers, and internes, dictated their statements to his accompanying stenographer, and swore them before the peripatetic

notary who acted as his Sancho Panza. He shouted "Ready for trial," elbowing his way among the mob of legal underlings smelling of damp rubber, acrid cigars, sweat, and wintergreen chewing-gum, who crowded into Part I, afterward herding his witnesses in the grimy corridors outside and trying to keep them in good humor, while he dashed frantically from one telephone-booth to another in an attempt to find such as had gone astray. He ate sketchily or not at all,—at cafeterias, lunch-counters, fruit-stands,—and had he not possessed what Mr. Choate is alleged to have declared to be the two chief requisites for a lawyer—'a stout pair of legs and a good digestion'—he would have fared badly. He learned the difference between the pharynx and the larynx, the femur and the collar-bone, a judge's order and a court order, and what declarations are part of the *res gestae* and what are not; and during that time he did not once lay eyes on Mr. Myer.

Instead, he was made bond-servant to Mr. Frank Earle McDaniel, a legal gladiator with an iron jaw,—and he sat reverently at the feet of Mr. Leander Hepper, the chief clerk. Simon viewed McDaniel, his immediate boss, as a pompous ass, but he recognized Hepper for what he was, a master craftsman of the law.

Mr. Hepper was a harassed little man with a bright red nose, who looked like Mr. Pipp. He lived in Flushing with a wife, five offspring, and a mother-in-law, neither smoked nor swore, acted as a lay reader in the Presbyterian Church, and received ten thousand a year in return for his ability to maintain a perpetual and beatific calm. He had been with Robinson, Myer & Burr for nineteen years and in a sense he *was* Robinson, Myer & Burr. "Ask Mr. Hepper." He was familiar with every point of pleading raised since 1735 and he knew the

Civil and Criminal Procedure Reports by heart. He took nobody's word for anything and judges were no more to him than chattering cockatoos. He smiled rarely. He never hurried. He spoke only to say, "You've left out a comma there," or "You've forgotten the 'and' after 'damages,'" or "The clerk said that, did he?—Well, tell him from me that he's a bone-head!" He had made but one mistake—and that was in 1911, when in a momentary aphasia he had overlooked the "petition for further relief" in an equity order. He would sit unruffled at his desk amid a hurricane of questions, directions, and objurgations, half snowed under by papers awaiting his signature, placidly studying some complaint, answer, or judgment which must be filed at the county court-house in nine minutes. In his heart he regarded the members of the firm as ignorant and debased commercialists and his soul vomited at them and all their works. He had been born in Newburyport, Mass.

Then, unexpectedly, Mr. Myer sent for Simon one day and said:

"We are sending McDaniel out to Honolulu—huh!—and we are going to turn the work he has been doing over to you,—eh. From now on you'll get three hundred a month——"

"Do you really think I'm up to it?"

"If I didn't—I wouldn't offer it to you—huh. I've listened to you examine witnesses—eh?"

Simon found that the work of actually trying cases was much easier than what he had been doing.

Otto, who had gone into an entirely different sort of office—that of ex-Justice Furman—and was getting only twelve hundred a year, was delighted at his friend's progress. So far, Simon had not had the opportunity to follow any of Mr. Robinson's advice, even had he had

the inclination to do so. He had not joined any church, or fraternal organization, or dallied with politics. Standing on his legs all day in court left him limp. He and Otto joined the Y. M. C. A. and played handball together in the late afternoons, after which they settled down to long evenings of study, and when Saturday came, put on flannel shirts, took their walking-sticks, and indulged in week-end walking-trips through the Ramapos, the Catskills, or the hills beyond Lake Mahopac.

Davis joined them infrequently upon these excursions. He had associated himself with a young, up-and-doing firm, of which one of the partners had been a former assistant district attorney, and reported progress in gathering in business upon a fifty-fifty basis.

"No use working your heads off, the way you fellows do. Why don't you get some fun out of life? The richest lawyers in town gather in most of their clients on the golf-course or on ocean liners. Our firm has a chap—a corker, too—who never has opened a report or so much as heard of a year-book, yet he makes fifteen thousand bucks per annum just hanging around Vichy and Baden-Baden. You can hire all the legal talent you need for five thousand a year. What you want is the business. You'll never get clients sitting in an attic or spending Sunday at the old homestead. How'll they ever hear of you?

"You ought to join a club, get into the regular Saturday-night poker game, and meet some real live people. Ever hear of Buckle, the asbestos king? I'd never met him in my life, but I ran into him the other night at Quicklick's with a couple of girls, and after a few rounds of drinks he told me how he was being blackmailed by some dame and before he knew it I had the case copper-riveted. Some case, by gosh! We got the woman's

record, had the police run her out of town, and charged him twelve thousand dollars for three days' work. He was glad to pay it, too! I never saw any man sweat blood so in my life!"

"How much did you make, sweetheart?" asked Simon.

"Only a little ole six thousand."

"On your statement, I should call it blood-money!" commented Otto disgustedly.

"You can call it that if you want to," returned the complaisant Davis. "A rose by any other name smells just as sweet in your bank-book.—Why not be honest about it?—Everybody capitalizes what he's got—brains, social position, acquaintance, and family connections. Kissing always goes by favor. It's well known that the biggest law firms are 'made,' simply by having some friend or relative turn over his business to 'em. Look at Walsh & Friedlander and Black, Gay & Schlemmer. Walsh's sister married the president of the Consolidated Electric, and Jerry Black is a neighbor, down at Seabright, of old Sol. Rosenthal of Peerless Pictures, and gets soused with him twice a week—spends half his time blowing Sol's girls to a good time!"

"Better be careful about getting too idealistic, it might hurt you!" suggested Simon.

"Well, you got to be practical! That's all it is. How many people do you suppose select a lawyer on account of what he knows?"

"In other words, you say the law is nothing but pull?"

"Or log-rolling—ninety-five per cent of it! Old Boodlebag moves to New York with his fat wife and wants to get into society. He meets young Charlie Boy Astorbilt who runs with the Westbury crowd and practises law from ten to two on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Charlie

asks Boodlebag to lunch with Dick Darcy, Tom Longwood, Larry Devereaux, or some of those high flyers, and the old boy thinks he's as good as in the Knickerbocker or the Links already. Does Charlie get his business? *Does* he? He *does!*"

"If you go on," mused Otto, "you may marry a wealthy widow some day, and become a leader of the bar."

"Then we'll ask him to dinner and get his business," mused Simon.

But in spite of it all they both continued to like Davis, perceiving that he had at least the virtue of honesty.

§ 5

The top floor—"furnished"—of Mrs. McGowan's, where Simon and Otto lived, consisted of a large front room with a fireplace, a large back room without a fireplace, and a dank, shadowy intermediate neutral zone where there was "a set bowl," a row of hooks for clothes, and a gas-stove standing on a plate of zinc. A pair of iron prison cots and mug-stained yellow bureaus, two or three greasy rugs, a few chairs, and a sagging lounge made up the roll-call of furniture. This symposium they supplemented, for a small initial outlay, from a second-hand furniture store on 14th Street, enough to make it habitable. They took turns cooking their own breakfasts. The other lodgers at Mrs. McGowan's were Mr. and Mrs. Angus Pennycuick, who occupied the second floor, and Miss Ora Spong and Miss Emmeline Ricketts—first front and first rear respectively. The basement was dedicated to the McGowan clan and visiting friends. No meals were served in the house, but it was possible

to sustain life at "The Wilmerding," a decayed hostelry just around the corner. Mr. Pennycuick was a Lutheran actuary, connected with an insurance office on Maiden Lane, and his dourness and angularity were only exceeded by the dourness and angularity of Mrs. Pennycuick. As joy-givers Simon, in actuarial terms, promptly "wrote them off." But Miss Spong and Miss Ricketts were forthcoming and eager, and they made it apparent that they regarded the coming of Simon and Otto as the beginning of a new era in their lonely lives.

Ora Spong was forty-five, vertebrate, annoyingly self-contained, and regarded as a wit by herself and Miss Ricketts. She made a business of collecting funny anecdotes and clever sayings and discharging them at intervals across the table, with an attention-calling sniff like the report heard after the white puff. Emmeline, who shared the same bathroom—was younger, given to giggling, of a yellowish plumpness and bouncingly friendly. She was what is known as a "buzzer," and thought it fetching to hum in an absent-minded and supposedly dégagé manner, and she made a dead set for Simon. "The long and the short of it,"—she used to say cosily.

The only bath—a tin tub, surrounded by a painted wooden palisade and fitted with a strange, pinchy, collapsible seat which was always precipitating itself and occupant into the water—was on the floor below and controlled by the Pennycuicks, to whom, under the terms of the Versailles Treaty, it belonged exclusively up to 9 P. M., at which hour it became *res communes*—or "first come, first served." The bathroom gave to life at the McGowans' a certain charming informality, putting everything on an intimate family basis, part of which Simon suspected to be intentional. Otherwise, it

seemed to him as if Emmeline must spend most of her life bathing, for inevitably, whenever he descended the stairs in his bathrobe and was about to rattle the knob, her voice would ring cheerily from behind the door:

"Just a minute, Mr. Kent. I'm almost through!"

Singing while in the tub was permitted—an almost necessary precaution, since the door-lock was tricky and one could never be quite sure that it would hold. The bathroom—while not a recognized meeting-place—served more or less in that capacity and brought the tenants together, conducing to courtesy and self-restraint. "Women and children first," as Simon said. But there was a certain amount of chicanery, and Ora would get in there and souse herself until Emmeline was ready, when, at a preconcerted signal, they would flit out and in, without so much as giving the boys a chance.—"Off agin, on agin, gone agin,—Finnigan." But they never washed out the tub.

Both Ora and Emmeline were careless about leaving their doors open, and whenever they heard Simon or Otto coming in, one or the other of them would call, in sweetly distant tones, "Oh, Mr. Kent (or Mr. Wiegand)! —I've got something to tell you!" They were always borrowing things at unexpected hours and inviting the "dear boys" to giddy little supper parties in their bedrooms, where, amid palpitating excitement, they cooked messy fudge and cohesive Welsh rabbit on their gas-range, discussed high-brow subjects such as the use of planes in modern art, Stravinski's minor thirds, or Sherwood Anderson's pathology. They held the opinion that it would be unfair to judge the Russian experiment as yet, and boldly suggested that there might still prove to be something in it. "Yes, I do mean it! I really think so!" Presently they became so irresistibly possessive that

even Simon, in spite of his natural courtesy and vulnerability where women were concerned, rebelled.

"Doing anything to-night, Mr. Kent?" Emmeline would trill from the ground floor. "How would you like to take me to see Isadora Duncan?"

"I'd like to, but I've got to work."

"O, blank the old work! I've bought two tickets."

"Really, I——"

"Work when you come back—why not?" brightly.

"I'm trying a case to-morrow morning. I've got to go over the statements of the witnesses."

"But you ought to have some relaxation!"

"Honest, Emmeline, I'd like to, but—if you'd only asked me this morning!"

"O dear! I only thought of it this afternoon. I really thought you might like to go, so I got the tickets."

Simon, knowing this to be a lie, nevertheless weakened; and Emmeline always instinctively knew just the right moment to add, with injured archness: "I'm beginning to think you don't like to go out with me!"

"Of course I do!" in hollow protest.

"Then why not to-night? They say it's a very intriguing show."

"We-l-l."

Joyously from below:

"O, fine! I'm so glad you'll come!—I'll be ready in two minutes. Would you wear the red hat or the blue one if you were me? Which do you like the best?"

"Bah!" grunted Otto. "You'd think they'd never seen a pair of pants in their lives!"

"Maybe they haven't!" assented Simon. "I have a feeling that we're the first Adams in their Eden."

"Hell! What do you suppose they want?"

"They probably don't know themselves," said Simon.

"But I wish to God they didn't want it. If they don't leave us alone I'm going to move out at the end of the month,—or something!"

The "or something" occurred, as luck would have it, only two days later, when Simon and Otto, having absolutely declined to be seduced into leaving their work, heard the giggling of the two girls as they ascended the stairs.

"If those two acidulated old vestals dare come up here after what we said, I'll strangle them!" declared Simon, who was working on his chapter entitled "The Equality of Women." He closed the book and slipped into the adjoining bedroom just as Ora and Emmeline, in imitation of "the bogie man," came creeping in.

"Ugh!—Ugh!—Ugh!—" they chanted in a facetious chorus of hushed awe. "'Here comes the bogie man!'"—"But we mustn't disturb the little dears,—it'll spoil their little workums!" added Ora with a sniff.

At this point Simon executed an encircling movement from the rear, grabbed them by their respective waists and carried them bodily down-stairs. It was shockingly rough and undignified. Emmeline screamed and mildly kicked,—she had seized the opportunity to put her arms around Simon's neck,—but Ora bore it with an expression of grim amusement. As they floundered down to the first floor Mr. and Mrs. Angus Pennycuick appeared in wrappers upon the landing above, their faces registering horrified disapproval.

"I am surprised at this unseemly behavior!" declared the non-plussed actuary!

"Such goings-on—in a respectable house!" echoed his wife. "I shall speak to Mrs. McGowan to-morrow morning!"

But Mrs. McGowan brushed her protests aside with a "What, thim old cats? Arrh, g'wan!"

§ 6

The firm of Robinson, Myer & Burr were famed as legal "go-getters." Collectively the three belonged to every variety of association worthy of the name, from the Concatenated Order of Hoo-Hoos to the Sacred Camels of King Menelik, and John Henry Robinson, when in full feather, was known as "His Highness, Most Loyal Grand Gander of the Blue Goose." Socially and geographically ubiquitous, they covered every aspect of sectionalism, managing to keep all three balls in the air at the same time—Mr. Robinson as a representative of the solid conservative interests and the "G.O.P.," Mr. Myer as a Son of the Border, while Mr. Burr, whose great-uncle had been a race-track tout in Louisville, posed as a professional Southerner and, when north of Jersey City, affected a drawl and called every girl "honey."

Mr. Robinson was the chairman of the Committee on Legal Ethics of the Interstate Bar Association, and Mr. Myer was a member of the Judiciary Committee of that same body; if these professional plums had not fallen into their legal laps, they would simply have gone out and organized another association which should show better taste. Mr. Burr, who performed mysterious functions and spent most of his time in Washington, rarely came to the office, and his room was utilized for directors' meetings and as a pen for waiting witnesses.

They never missed a trick. There was hardly a new organization that did not carry on its letter-head the motto: "Robinson, Myer & Burr, Advisory Counsel" or "Robinson, Myer & Burr, Attorneys." They had only one weakness. They were successful but they were not really fashionable—and they knew it. At least, Mr.

Robinson knew it, and it hurt him. For some reason, which he could not divine, people of established social position did not consult Robinson, Myer & Burr as to their affairs. They were much more likely to go to such men as Judge Furman.

The young men of Robinson, Myer & Burr were crisp, well-dressed young men, and they affected to be "hard-boiled." Their familiar talk was of Wall Street and big business. At eventide, after they had fought their way into the fetid cars that bore them to Flushing, Hackensack, and the Bronx, they may have shoved their babies around the block in perambulators purchased on the instalment plan, bargained thriftily at the "A. & P." or attended the Nickel Palace Movies with their wives, but at the noon hour they blew their clients to lunch at the Savarin, smoked Coronas, referred casually to their favorite bootleggers, and prophesied a rise in the bank rate. They were experts at cultivating acquaintances, knew that a good motor was rather to be chosen than great learning, and looked forward to some day being able to join the Westchester-Biltmore Club and meet nice people—*really* nice people.

The firm made a habit of "retaining counsel,"—the better the more expensive, and the more expensive the better,—by virtue of a well-defined and long-established policy. In the first place, since the chief partners themselves knew more about business and the getting of it than about law and the practice of it, and less than nothing of the philosophy and principles of its application, there was really no one in the office of sufficient legal distinction properly to impress a court of other than first instance.

Mr. Robinson felt, and felt rightly, that when he retained famous and learned counsel to assist in the pres-

entation of a case, he dignified not only his client's cause, but himself as well. Certainly, it gave the firm a vicarious standing which they would not have otherwise enjoyed and it enabled Mr. Robinson and Mr. Myer to be on friendly and sometimes intimate terms with many leaders of the profession who, had it not been for the fees growing out of the relationship, would never have invited them inside their offices. To bring in outside counsel cost nothing, since the client, impressed by the importance of the questions involved, cheerfully paid the bill, while Robinson, Myer & Burr gained immeasurable *kudos* by the association. Among the eminent counsel frequently retained by them was Judge Isaac Furman.

Simon's first visit to Judge Furman's made him feel homesick. It was so much more like what he had expected, after the Harvard Law School. While it was situated in a building directly opposite that occupied by Robinson, Myer & Burr, it was so different that it might have been a thousand miles away. It was rather dark, shabby, and, at first glance, perhaps even a little gloomy, but there was a pleasing absence of small boys in buttons, potted palms, spruce young men, dinky girls with powdered noses, or any kind of "swank."

In Judge Furman's office there was not even a time-clock or a railing of any kind. If you wanted to call upon him you just opened the door and, if you saw anybody in the offing, you asked:

"Judge in?"

"No. Sorry.—He's up at the Appellate Division.—Wait?"

"When'll he be back?"

"O, 'round one o'clock, I guess. He usually comes in before lunch.—Want to leave your name?"

"Won't bother.—I'll drop 'round again."

In that atmosphere of leisurely good nature time did not seem of any particular importance, but a gray-haired woman known as "Nurse," who acted as Judge Furman's private secretary, kept track of his appointments and routed out clients or callers when they threatened to make him late. He had no partners and only three law clerks, of whom Otto was one, yet the amount and the importance of the business passing through his hands was enormous. He was a Vermonter by birth, and had practised his profession in his native town until middle life when, having become an acknowledged authority upon constitutional questions, pressure of business had compelled his removal to New York, where he had instantly taken a commanding place at the bar. He was now over seventy, possessed of an ample fortune, took no vacations except to go salmon-fishing, smoked like an old-fashioned locomotive, and, until the demolition of the original Astor House, had always had for his daily lunch a dozen oysters and a pint of champagne, taken standing at the bar. He was red-cheeked, clean-shaven, punctilious, good-natured, a brilliant raconteur, and a profound lawyer. He wrote most of his letters by hand and refused to have a telephone nearer his desk than the outer office. He had never married and rarely went out into society, but when he did so, was usually the life of the party. He lived in a corner house on Fifth Avenue having a huge library, was fond of music, and owned a box at the opera which he practically never occupied, giving it away to his friends. Occasionally, at the end of an evening, he might slip into the back of the box and, still in his overcoat, listen to part of a last act, before going to bed. He was universally known among his brethren of the bar as "Uncle Isaac."

Simon had found him standing in his outer doorway, telling a departing client—who happened, Simon later ascertained, to be the president of a railroad—what he thought of him.

"I told you that if you tried any of that monkey business you'd get your neck in a noose—and I'm glad you have!" he declared. "The only thing for you to do now is either to get out of it—if you can—or take up the whole damned bond issue. If you can't obey the law, what's the use of having a lawyer to advise you? Good-bye!—What is it you want, young man?"

"I was looking for my room-mate, Otto Wiegand."

The expression of ire upon Judge Furman's rugged countenance dissolved into one of kindly interest, like a granite New England hillside suddenly warmed by the winter sun. The flash from under the jutting eyebrows softened from steel to blue. Simon had never before encountered one who conveyed such an impression of intellectual power, integrity, and human understanding. He knew that he was in the presence of a great man.

"So you're Simon!" said "Uncle Isaac," extending his hand. "I'm glad to see you! Otto's gone to Albany. But come in." And he led the way into his office, where, in spite of the warmth of the weather, a fire of cannel coal smouldered in the basket grate.

"Sit down!—Have a cigar?"

He pushed a box across his desk.

"You're the fellow," he remarked, leaning back in his chair, "who thinks that there's a higher law than the Constitution!"

Simon had forgotten that he had ever disclosed any such opinion—but he was immensely flattered that Judge Furman should condescend to attribute that or any other theory to him.

"Gosh!" he thought, feeling himself growing hot about the ears. "What the dickens is the old fellow referring to?"

It came to him that Judge Furman must have read one of his articles in the *Harvard Law Review*, and he hastily endeavored to remember what he had once thought. It was a miserable failure.

"Here's a match," said Judge Furman as Simon, trying to appear at ease, fumbled nervously in the box for a cigar. "You wrote those reviews of Reichel's 'Gesetz und Richterspruch' and Cosentini's 'Filosofia del Diritto,' didn't you?'

"I believe so—that was three or four years ago," answered Simon, weakly. "I'm afraid they were pretty superficial."

"Maybe, but they showed originality. I don't mean that there was anything essentially original in your theory, but your presentation was ingenious and suggestive.—I don't agree with you, mind! Those articles made me think!—I meant to write and congratulate you, at the time. I do now!"

"I don't suppose I really did anything more than to emphasize the point that the so-called interpretation of the Constitution demands the following of some legal principle not contained in the instrument itself and hence in a sense superior to it. That has been the history of the common law, hasn't it? Only, the nature of the process that goes on, when a leading case is applied by analogy, or limited in its application, or distinguished, is more or less concealed. The law enabling this to be done must be higher or at least equivalent to that which, by a fiction, is said to be in process of 'interpretation.'"

"I can see now why the dean thinks so much of you!" said the judge, with a smile.

"What dean?"

"Dean Pound of the Harvard Law School. He was dining with me the other evening and spoke very highly of you—said in fact that he'd give a lot to get you to go back there and teach. Why don't you?"

"I think first I'd like to see the practical side—and then I've got to earn my living."

"How do you like it, so far?"

"Disillusioning but interesting," answered Simon. "Anyhow, I'm getting plenty of experience."

"Yes, my old friend Robinson knows how to corral business," admitted Uncle Isaac amiably. "Sorry you've gone over to the Philistines! But I understand from Otto that you're writing a book. You have an inspiring subject."

"It is a great subject," agreed Simon warmly, "but I begin to think that I shall have to change my conception of the meaning of liberty."

Judge Furman looked at him penetratingly.

"Now and then," he said, "I am glad that I have spent my life in a simpler world than that in which you will spend yours!—Will you come and see me sometimes?"

Simon arose. He did not wish to trespass on Judge Furman's time or to lower the esteem in which, apparently, the latter held his mental capacity.

"It's awfully kind of you. I'd like nothing better."

As he was about to offer his hand, his eye chanced upon the framed photograph of a boy in uniform on the desk. Certainly he knew that face!

"My nephew—Garrick Bradley," explained the judge. "He was an aviator.—Handsome chap, isn't he!"

"Garry?"

"Did you know him?"

"I tutored him for three summers at Northeast Harbor! But I had no idea he was in the service. I didn't realize he was old enough!" He stopped short. "You said 'was' an aviator? He isn't——"

"Alive and kicking. He's a freshman at Harvard. I'm going to make a lawyer of him, I hope."

"How are Mrs. Bradley and—" he was going to say "Vira" but changed it to—"your niece?"

"They're both well. Now that Garry's at college, my sister has seized the opportunity to take Vira abroad for a couple of years. They're going to spend the winter in Rome."

"I suppose she's quite a big girl now?" pondered Simon. "When I knew her she was just a kid of thirteen or so—a terribly nice little kid."

"Well, she's sixteen now—and a grown-up young lady!" replied her uncle. "Her picture is there, too. I keep them both by me. They're the only children I've got."

Simon bent over and examined the photograph. He would have known those eyes anywhere. They were the same grave eyes that for three summers had watched him so solemnly across camp-fire and canoe thwart,—only the face was no longer that of a little girl,—it was oval and shapely, with a small piquant nose, an equally small but determined chin, and a sensitive mouth, sweetly curved—the whole expression innocent, direct, fearless, and challenging. For an instant, in place of the smell of books, there came to him the odor of fir and pine, the salt breath of the ocean; instead of the filtered daylight in a dusty Wall Street law office, he caught the sparkle of a million ripples on a blue estuary walled by rugged hills, felt the spindrift on his cheek, saw "the wet sail arching through the rainbow round the bow."

"'And then what?'" he murmured unconsciously.

"Eh?"

"She's lovely!" answered Simon. "Perfectly charming!"

"One of the new generation—with everything the old had that's worth keeping—but with a clear vision for right values—and the courage to think for themselves. They'll need it!"

"Please tell Garry to let me know, if he's in town."

"I shall hope to see you long before that!" said "Uncle Isaac," as they shook hands.

CHAPTER V

§ 1

Simon's daily life during the next three years did not differ materially from that of most young men of his age and profession, although it may have been slightly more hygienic. Each morning the same alarm-clock which had roused them in Cambridge exploded like a depth bomb and hurled them from the profundities of healthy sleep to the surface of scattered consciousness. They shrieked curses and flung pillows at the offending mechanism, tossed a medicine ball, sneaked down in their wrappers to the sacred bath, made their coffee, and were off to the office by eight o'clock. University Place is within easy walking distance of Wall Street and they took it at a four-mile pace, winter and summer.

They lunched at chop-houses and cafeterias and were occasionally invited by their elders to the Recess and the Mid-day, the Lawyers' Club (which is for bankers), the Bankers' Club (which is for lawyers), and the Downtown Association, where they gazed through a blue haze of tobacco smoke at famous lawyers and financiers eating crab meat *farcie*. They passed their bar examinations and celebrated the event in a wild debauch. They played pinocle and fifty-cent-limit poker, condescended, at the Harvard Club, to men who at Cambridge had condescended to them, attended baseball games, prize-fights, and symphony concerts, and at rare intervals were invited out to dinner or the opera by enterprising mammas who wanted their daughters to know the right sort of young men. Once, in the early days of their vassalage at

Mrs. McGowan's, before the bath-hours had been definitely determined, they attended divine service under the escort of Mr. and Mrs. Angus Pennycuick and once—but only once—they took Ora Spong and Emmeline Ricketts to Coney Island.

Simon was now twenty-nine years old and most of his awkwardness of manner had disappeared. He was taller than Davis Pettibone, big-boned, and still carried himself with a slight stoop. From dark-red his hair had become auburn. He had a wide mouth which turned upward at the corners, large white teeth, a quizzical smile, and a humorously ironic New England turn of speech. As an advocate he understated rather than overstated his cases, made no claims that he could not substantiate, neither took nor wished to take any unfair advantage, conceding much to his adversaries, and scoring small victories. And because he was so palpably just, and rather quaint, juries followed him like sheep and gave him unanticipated verdicts. They did not know why they did so, but, at the end of a case, most of the talesmen would sidle up to Simon, grin, and give him a hearty grip. "He's all right!" said Mr. Hepper. "Some boy!"

His notes on the "History of Liberty," the full scope of which he had plotted with the aid of Otto's wide vision, had grown enormously, and he had begun roughly to throw them into chapters.

It was toward the end of this maturing period, while working upon the draft of his first chapter—"The Subjection of Women," that he met Clarice Hungerford. A light fall of snow had glazed the steps of the Public Library when Simon came out after verifying a quotation before dining at the Harvard Club. In the conflicting cross lights of 42d Street and Fifth Avenue, he did

not notice the young woman just in front of him, until she slipped and fell. For a moment she lay there, stunned seemingly at the unexpectedness of her collapse, made an effort to rise, and then subsided again into a curled heap, not ungracefully. Simon bent over her.

"Can I help you up?"

Her pale face shone up at him, through the half-darkness, like an opal. Although he was not looking for an adventure, he felt her attraction instantly.

"O dear! How dumb of me! I'm afraid I've turned my ankle."

He gave her a hand and she stood up, tried her foot gingerly—and winced.

"If you can manage to make the curb I'll get you a taxi," he volunteered, aware of a strange excitement. "Put your hand on my other shoulder. That's right. Now, then!"

He half carried her down the steps and across the sidewalk to the curb, where he stood supporting her until a cab came to their rescue. It made him feel strong and chivalrous. She was so soft, pliant, appealing.

"Look out now!" he said to himself. "Don't go looking for trouble." But his tongue refused the advice of counsel.

"Better let me see you home," he urged, with an assumption of authority. "What's the address?"

She gave him a number on West 58th Street. Her tone and enunciation were those of a lady, her voice a low drawl. Their conversation on the way up the avenue was polite and cautious, and it rather piqued him that she did not appear more responsive. Evidently she had too much sense to let herself in for anything on such a chance introduction.

"Stung for a fare!" thought Simon. "Nothing doing!

I needn't have offered. However—! Rather want to see what she really looks like!"

But all the time, as they hitched along up the avenue, he was conscious of her arm against his and some subtle emanation from her, that acted upon him like an intoxicant. The taxi stopped before a forbidding-looking entrance of yellow brick and grimy Indiana limestone, lighted by old-fashioned lamps on either side of the stoop, after the manner of a police station.

"How does it feel?"

"Better. I think I can walk all right, now."

She did not offer to pay and he helped her out and up the steps into the pallid circle cast by the engraved globes. A feckless parting it seemed to him.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" he was inaudibly asking of her.

He attempted to open the door, but it stuck fast despite his rattling.

Mechanically they peered through the frosted glass. The light from within fell full upon her face. It was his first unobscured look at her and he realized in a flash that up to that moment in his life he had been merely marking time. She was the loveliest, the most enchanting, the most alluring creature he had ever seen; her beauty that of translucent alabaster, of creamy skin and dusky shadows lurking beneath red, red gold,—the beauty of a Magdalene by Henner.

"That's funny!" she said. "The elevator must be up."

"It'll be down in a minute!" he assured her.

Their eyes met and something infinitely more cogent than words passed between them.

The slowly uncoiling rope descended the shaft, a negro boy opened the door.

"Won't you come up?" she asked, and smiled.

§ 2

The Hungerford appartment was on the fifth floor, overlooking a street dedicated to garages and motor accessories, and, even inside the closed windows, the air thundered to the roar of backing cars punctuated with terrifying explosions which might have interrupted conversationalists far less absorbed. It was high-ceiled, wainscoted in mahogany, and had, doubtless, once been regarded as a thing of beauty, but it was now dingy from neglect, and against its background of antiquated what-nots, yellow plush sofas, and magenta portières, the girl's beauty gleamed like the proverbial jewel in a sty. Simon noticed none of these drab surroundings and, anyway, compared to his room at the McGowans' the place seemed palatial.

He had no real impression of the length of his stay; it might have been half an hour or three, for, under her questioning, he developed an unheard-of volubility.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this!" But he knew all the time why he was telling her.

She listened cordially to all he had to say but when he touched upon the law her interest manifestly increased, and, on learning the name of his firm, she mentioned several cases in which she had read of their being retained, including that of a suit for breach of promise recently brought by a moving-picture star. She wanted to know if lawyers earned a tremendous lot of money. She liked lawyers, she said, they were so intellectual. Her own tastes were of that sort, she admitted. She was very fond of reading, had in fact gone to the Public Library for the purpose, that very afternoon.—So many of her friends gave up reading after they came out!

There was her cousin Muriel, for instance,—Muriel Hungerford—she didn't believe poor Muriel ever looked at a book! People missed so much pleasure! There was nothing like a good book, was there? Thus encouraged, Simon modestly admitted that he was attempting to write one. "Liberty?" What a wonderful subject! How long was it to be? People got paid enormously for writing books, didn't they? She confessed to having tried to write a little herself at odd times, but she was too much of a "stupid." Simon assured her fervently that she gave no evidence of it,—quite the contrary!

Laughing, Clarice offered to become his amanuensis. Not seriously of course! She really thought a girl's place was at home. Her words conjured up for Simon a vision of a cosy library lined high with books, a sea-coal fire, —a beautiful girl, surprisingly like Clarice, sewing beneath a shaded lamp.

She was somewhat less definite than he had been as to the factual details of her personal history, but he gathered that she and her widowed mother occupied their New York apartment during the winter months only and spent the remainder of the year on Long Island; that her father had belonged to a well-known family—she assumed, of course, that Simon knew something about the Hungerfords—the other members of which, her aunts and cousins, all lived on Fifth Avenue; that she had spent most of her girlhood in the country until she had gone to "Rosemary" (Simon knew it for a fashionable boarding-school); that in her love of out-of-doors she took after her father, who had been a famous sportsman; that she did not care especially for society, and when not going out to concerts or the theatre preferred to "just read." Simon, who had already disclosed similar tastes, was struck by their community of interests.

He had not had much time for concerts, he said, but he was fond of music. Would she perhaps go with him some time? Clarice promised to take the offer under consideration—when she knew him better.

"I feel as if I had known you always!" he declared. "Who knows? Perhaps I have!"

Clarice let it go at "When you were a king in Babylon and I was a Christian slave," but she did not repudiate the possibility.

The waiting taxi, which in his excitement he had omitted to send away, had ticked off $5.85 when he came down-stairs, and he discharged it.

"Gosh, what luck!" he kept repeating to himself as, with his head among the stars, he walked back through the frosty glittering streets, to the Harvard Club. "What luck!"

He did not attempt to specify in just what the luck consisted. He did not conceive that he had fallen in love. He had merely found an entrancing companion. Marriage had never entered his head and did not then. But he knew that from now on everything would be different.

Since his senior year at Harvard, when he had been momentarily pensive over the pale hands of Phyllis Onderdonk, one of which he had squeezed violently under a class-day moon, his life had been devoid of feminine interests. His passion for law had left him no time for romance. Phyllis's announcement of her engagement to an instructor in the Fine Arts Department had not jarred him in the least. Pale hands were nothing in his life. The girls he had met in New York at dances—younger sisters of his Harvard classmates for the most part—struck him as vapid, shrill-voiced children who did nothing but powder their small noses and chatter

about musical comedies and cabarets. They all appeared to be about the same size and weight, parroted the same ideas and opinions, and expressed them in identical terms.

He much preferred the square-toed independence of the young ladies he met in "The Village," who at least could talk of something besides night clubs and booze, and whose reticences, such as they were, were not due to a fear of depreciating their market value. But Clarice, aside from her looks, was different from any girl he had ever met—an absolute "knock-out!" Beauty as well as brains!

He entered the crowded lounge of the club with none of his customary feeling of being an outsider in New York with nowhere else to go. He had planned to dine early and work at the Bar Association, but he was much too exhilarated to work. He wanted to go out and tear up the town. Unfortunately, there was nobody in sight with whom he could tear it up. If he only knew Clarice a little better! He already thought of her as Clarice. Why not? She had shown that she liked him. She had invited him to call. It could do no harm to ask her, even if she refused. Suppose he did seem to be rushing her a little? You had to follow up things,—particularly things like that—strike while the iron was hot! Otherwise, she might slip away from him and that would be a disaster. Going to the telephone-booth, he ran through the H's: "Hungerford, Mrs. Selma" same address—that must be it. Clarice answered the call. Her voice was very sweet.

"O, Mr. Kent!"

"Miss Hungerford?—I say! Would it—Is it too late to ask you to dine, if you happen to have nothing else to do? We might take in a play or something."

"Are you sure you really want me?"

"*Do* I!"

"Well, just a minute! It's only that I hate to leave mamma alone. Still—she left me this afternoon!—I'll ask her——"

She was back in less than no time.

"I'd simply love to!—Where shall we meet?"

Simon mentioned the most expensive restaurant in New York.

He wondered what he had done to deserve such kindness from the gods, when he saw his girl of girls come smiling from the cloak-room—a lambent flame of beauty.

"Out of the East she came!—Eudoxia!"

At the trifling cost of thirty-nine dollars he told her with eagerness all about his professional ambitions, the "History of Liberty," and his ideas on the subject of the equality of women, while Clarice, across a glass of Monopol 1911, listened with profoundly respectful eyes. Going home in the taxi, he kissed her passionately and met no resistance.

"But how can a clever, brilliant man like you see anything in stupid little me?" she whispered, with her fingers twined in the buttonhole of his lapel.

Simon assured her that she was the cleverest girl he had ever met—and the most beautiful, the sweetest—and in every way the most wonderful.

§ 3

Simon saw Clarice next day and every day for three weeks, but not until the end of that period, when he was so obsessed with her drowsy beauty that he was distraught without its soothing presence, did he meet her mother. Mrs. Hungerford proved rather a "soaker," but he consoled himself by the reflection that Clarice

did not look in the least like her. Clarice was clearly all Hungerford. Her mother—a Martin—was a faded straw blonde, of about sixty, who just escaped gum-chewing by being a candy-eater, and she consumed half a pound of chocolate caramels during her first interview with Simon, the candy seeming to act upon her as a conversational stimulant.

Clarice had told her all about him, she said, carefully spreading the piece of sticky tissue-paper from the last caramel on the accumulated pile upon the table in front of her, and she was glad for Clarice to have the right sort of "gentleman friend." You didn't know who half the people you met were these days. Wouldn't Mr. Kent have a piece of candy? She loved candy. Yes, it really "spelled happiness" for her. She couldn't get on without it, although her doctor—Doctor Jenkins, did Simon know him?—he was the regular family physician of the Hungerfords as well as of the Vanderbilts—Doctor Jenkins told her that he might have to make her give it up, on account of the possibility of diabetes—later on, of course.

There were empty candy-boxes lying around everywhere—pink boxes, yellow boxes, white boxes,—boxes decorated with violets, pansies, rosebuds,—quarter-pound, half-pound, pound, and five-pound boxes—round boxes, oblong boxes, and square boxes, with ribbons and without. Mrs. Hungerford seemed to collect them, much as a game-hunter collects heads, as evidence of her skill in the pursuit of the gum-drop. "That's a pretty one," she would say, "I got that at Page & Shaw's." It was a new and highly uninteresting sport to Simon. However, if the old girl wanted to chew candy, let her. It was better than tobacco. Sometimes he caught a gleam in her eye that made him suspect that she was not such

a "bonehead" as she looked; otherwise there did not seem to be an idea in it.

Closer familiarity with the apartment revealed the fact that it was cluttered with magazines of the cheaper and more lurid sort. But Clarice was gentle and sweet with her mother, and she also played rather prettily upon the jingly antiquated square piano, retained, as Mrs. Hungerford said, because she liked antiques—"*old* antiques." She liked old, "homey" things anyway, and she was glad to say that Clarice was a real home girl, the kind that would make a good quiet wife for some hardworking young man that didn't want to be always gadding around.

Simon, while admiring her patience and tact, pitied Clarice, because he realized that to a girl of her intelligence and refinement such a mother must at times prove rather trying. He vaguely wondered where a scion of the noble line of Hungerfords had found her. But he blessed her for leaving them alone.

By this time he was absolutely convinced that only by possessing Clarice could he have any hope for happiness. They were already upon terms of close intimacy, and he was touched by the complete confidence with which she surrendered herself to him. He was by no means undersexed, and the clinging warmth of her soft long body, her full bosom and white round arms, as with closed eyes and partly open mouth she suffered his caresses, set him on fire. But to do him justice, Simon, although a perfectly normal young man, had no thought of taking advantage of her trust. Sometimes, to be sure, when his caresses became too fierce, she would push him gently away with her hand upon his chest and a "No, Simon dear!" or "You mustn't Simon—really!" He had said nothing; but his actions had told everything.

He was now a nightly habitué of the flat, and, when they did not go to the theatre or the "movies," he would bring up his manuscript and read her extracts from the temporarily neglected chapter on "The Subjection of Women," in which he took a radically advanced position, decrying the double standard as barbaric and illogical, and as based solely upon the property idea. Clarice was enthusiastic about it and occasionally made comments which struck Simon as keenly illuminating.

"Do you really and truly believe all those things, Simon?" she demanded one evening.

"Believe them? Of course I believe them! What right has one human being, unless he is an absolute hypocrite, to demand from his mate a higher moral code than he practises himself?—The time has come for modern society, with the help of modern science, to face the truth. Except from the man's selfish point of view every woman has the same right to lead her own life, limited by her contractual relations, of course, as a man. I'll go to the mat on that!" he told her vehemently.

But, in spite of the liberality of his views on the general subject of sex, Simon had no idea of testing them upon Clarice. Their relations, while frankly amorous, had not proceeded upon any convention-defying theory. There had been, it was true, a certain informality about their meeting, but it had been no pick-up. She was a Hungerford and a lady. He felt as much committed to this girl who had allowed him to kiss and fondle her as if he had stood up beside her in open church and listened with her to the calling of their bans. He knew that he would be faithful to her, and she to him. Thereto he plighted his mental troth.

Simon, who hated to be guyed, was secretive with Otto. Besides it wasn't fair to the girl. He let it be understood

that his work claimed all his time at the Bar Association. Months might have gone by, without anything more definite, had it not been for Simon's realization one evening that he simply had to have Clarice Hungerford—and that as soon as he legitimately could.

All the next day, through his dictation, his noisy conferences with Myer, his wrangles with Hepper, and his hectic hours in the court-room, he saw Clarice's opal eyes, and at five o'clock he went to her apartment, conscious of the imminence of fate, but without plan, content to leave himself in its hands and to let the current of passion sweep him where it would. He knew that he was powerless to struggle against it, even if he had desired to do so; but he did not do so, and upon his arrival—her mother being out—he seized her in his arms with an exhilarating sense of possession.

"Glad to see me?"

"O, Simon! I'm always glad to see you!"

He had no doubt of it. This priceless jewel, this glorious girl was absolutely his. He kissed her again and again.

"I hope you always will be!"

They had cocktails and a "dividend"—Clarice made wonderful cocktails out of a nip of Bacardi, a dash of curaçoa, and a hint of pineapple—after which they dined gaily at an old-fashioned restaurant on one of the Forties, and then sauntered to Broadway.

They had formed the lovers' habit of going to the "movies" and, without verbal formulation, instinctively drifted toward the Capitol. In the dark remoteness of the loges they were as protected as in a *cabinet particular*, and they sat with ankles locked and fingers twined as they watched the old, old Griffith's story of the village maiden who falls—or seems to fall—an innocent

victim to the sleek and dashing urban villain. It suddenly came over Simon with some self-satisfaction how easily, had he so chosen, he could have been a villain himself. He knew now just how trustful a girl could be and yet be absolutely "on the level." If he had wanted to take advantage of her, Clarice might not have refused him anything. She was hardly more than a child. No wonder these seducers had an easy time of it!

In the privacy of the almost bed-like fauteuil Simon felt as if he were already married to Clarice. She had let her head lower to his shoulder, and now, with both hands in his, was watching the picture through half-closed eyes. Simon bent and kissed her hair, and she looked up at him with a dreamy, blissful smile. Already the picture was rushing to its happy end, the black-browed villain had plunged thirty stories to the street, the accomplices in the fake marriage had been hailed to prison, and the rustic hero with the heart of gold was gathering the little wistful mother and her chubby child to his brawny bosom, in the final fade-out. One could almost hear it saying "Pa-pa."

"The old stuff still seems to get across!" said Simon as they disentangled themselves and he helped her on with her coat. "Why can't they think up something new?"

"It's because it's real life," answered Clarice. "Things happen just that way all the time."

"Only difference is that in these days nobody would blame the girl. The family would simply send a wire: 'Come on home, Lucile. We'll board the baby.'"

"Of course they wouldn't blame the girl, if she thought she was married," pointed out Clarice. "They didn't in the picture!"

Simon, recognizing this to be technically the case, was

bothered by the incontrovertible and obvious fact that the incident of the fake marriage had been lugged in by the ears, to meet the requirements of the censor. The story was in reality the story of a girl who had "sinned."

"O, well,—I mean even if she hadn't!" said Simon as they followed the crowd up the ramp, through the foyer, past the shameless osculations on the gaudy posters of the next week's showing, and out into the powdery night.

"I wish that were so!"

"Of course it's so! Do you suppose that to-day any decent fellow, if he really loved a girl, would refuse to marry her, simply because at some time or other, and before he met her, she had fallen for somebody else? Not for a minute, he wouldn't!"

"But all men are not like you, Simon!"

Clarice had never been more lovely than at that moment. Her flushed face was radiant, her eyes alive with swiftly changing lights.

"I guess I'm no different from the average," he answered modestly.

She clutched his arm as he steered her through the crowd.

"O, I'm so happy, Simon!" she sighed.

But after that she fell silent and they hardly spoke again on the way to the apartment. They tiptoed into the flat, and turned on the lights in the living-room. Mrs. Hungerford had already gone to bed, leaving behind her, in a pile of tissue-paper, the evidences of her evening's struggle with a pink candy-box, upon the cover of which was portrayed a naked Cupid in an airplane, waving a postman's cap, and scattering earthward billet-doux and floral offerings.

They looked at one another. The next instant she was

in his arms, amid the litter of magazines upon the sofa.

"My darling! My own darling!" he whispered as he sought her mouth and kissed her until with a gasp she freed herself.

"O, Simon! I do love you."

"And I love you!"

Again they kissed—tumultuously, fiercely.

"Dear Clarice!—Sweetheart!"

"My darling!"

"Will you marry me?—Say you will!"

"O, Simon!"

She was trembling now and her eyes were wet. He kissed them, and her tears tasted salt upon his lips. She began to sob. Concerned but happy, he caressed her gently.

"What's the matter, dear?"

She continued to weep. Then with an effort she drew herself away, and, regarding him with an expression in which love and longing strove to conquer fear, said timidly:

"Simon, do you know whose story you saw to-night?—It was mine!"

§ 4

Simon's pulse stopped, then raced. Could she be teasing him? The pitiful curve of her bent neck confessed the truth.

"I don't suppose—you want me—*now!*"

Where were his vaunted principles? He swallowed—twice. It was unbelievable, but——!

"Of—course—I—want—you!"

"Even after what you said, I couldn't let you love me without telling you,—*could* I?"

His arms were still around her, his right hand clasped

upon her breast. The impalpable fragrance that was peculiarly hers was in his nostrils. He pulled her to him tight.

"It isn't what you've *done*, but what you *are* that counts!"

"Of course it was all over long ago.—There was only one."

He winced. The thought of Clarice in the arms of another revolted him.

"But I didn't love him the way I love you—not in the least, Simon! This is so beautiful. Our companionship is so perfect. It would wreck my life to lose you, dear, but your happiness is the important thing."

"If that hadn't been so, you wouldn't have told me."

"I loved you too much not to tell you!"

A doubt assailed him.

"But why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because unless you wanted to marry me—or to love me—it wouldn't have mattered. And this is the first time I really knew. Besides," she went on eagerly, "I felt sure all along, from what you said, that you wouldn't let it make any difference. We've discussed it often and often."

Simon acknowledged the justice of it. He had been the first to express his belief in the independence of women.

"But I know," she added, "that sometimes one says things without really meaning them."

"I meant exactly what I said!" replied Simon bravely. "This is a good deal of a whack, naturally. But I'll get over it.—The only thing that really matters is that we love each other. We've got to look forward and not back,—forget everything that's past!"

She threw her arms about his neck.

"You're wonderful, Simon! There never was anybody like you!"

"I guess I'm not the only fellow who was ever confronted with this sort of situation. You're a brave woman, Clarice!—It hurts a little, of course. But it will all fade out, like a scar. The time will come when we'll never think of it again!"

Clarice had buried her face in the hollow of his arm. She was saying something,—what, he could not at first hear exactly. Then he made it out.

"I had a baby."

Bing! It was as if he had climbed painfully to his feet at the last count, only to be knocked flat again by a swinging blow upon the chin. So there was a baby! Yet clearly, the fact of her having had a child did not alter the situation. Her offense—if it was an offense—did not lie in that but in the antecedent cause, which he was prepared to overlook. Nevertheless, her disclosure left him a bit groggy, and for a moment quite sickened him. To be obliged to bring up another man's child might conceivably put a strain on anybody's altruism. Suppose he hated the infant? And then this thing about Clarice herself! He must think it all over quietly,—get away by himself and think it out. But in so doing he must not lead her to infer that he had changed his attitude; merely that in an important matter like marriage these facts should be carefully considered. He groped for a proper form of expression.

"Gee, Clarice!" was all he could think of.

§ 5

Simon sat silent on the sofa, holding Clarice motionless in his arms. Fifty thousand years of savage inheri-

tance fought within him against a paltry decade of education. Clarice—another man's woman! "Damaged goods!" It was incredible! She herself had confessed it, so it must be true; but it seemed no more possible than if she had told him that she was dead. Well, she *was* dead! His Clarice—the Clarice he had taken her to be—the one that he loved—this woman now lying so still and almost without breathing in his arms—was dead; gone forever. Out with the body! So spake his property-instinct—his jealousy. Then she strangled a sob, and his senses told him that she was very much alive. He strained her to him.

"Poor Clarice!—Poor kid!"

This was the Clarice that he loved; it was that other Clarice who was dead,—a different one entirely, with whom the woman in his arms had nothing whatever in common except her name.

"You're a brave girl!" he exclaimed. "I guess there aren't many women as straight as you, Clarice!"

"'Straight'?" She stared at him.

"As honest, I mean! There aren't many girls who would take a chance on telling a man a thing like that!"

"Any decent girl would!—I had to tell you, Simon. I just couldn't marry you without.—I really love you. you see!"

Her eyes were limpid reservoirs of truth. Yet had she not told that other that she loved him too? Had she not looked at him in just that way?

"O, God! Clarice!—How did you come to do it!" he groaned miserably, putting her down upon the sofa and walking across the room to the fireplace. He paced up and down the rug, with hands in pockets, biting his lips.

"I suppose it's hard for you to believe," she answered

without resentment. "It must seem rather out of character!"

"I should think it did—!" He stopped and looked at her, consumed with curiosity. "I don't suppose it's any of my business, really. I don't want to know anything more than is absolutely necessary or than you want to tell me——"

"I'll tell you anything you ask me!"

"You said it was your story we saw on the screen tonight. You don't mean there was a mock marriage or anything like that?"

"Nothing like that."

"Then how did you come to go with this man?"

Clarice turned away her head.

"I don't know, Simon," she answered in a voice that was just audible. "I was lonely and discouraged. He was kind and sympathetic. I liked him. He said he loved me."

Simon gnawed at his nails.

"Did you love him?"

"Sort of, I guess.—Not the way I do you, Simon!"—She buried her face in the sofa-cushions.

"Did he ask you to marry him?"

She made a little muffled noise, but whether or not in affirmation he could not tell.

"What?" he insisted.

She shook her head.

"No."

"Then why——?"

Simon was tearing furiously at his fingers now.

"I suppose I thought I loved him! How did I know? I didn't think much about it.—I just let myself go!"

He gave an acrid laugh.

"Just like that!—Christ!"

He threw himself into one of the spotted corduroy Morris chairs and ground his fists into his temples. He was near sobbing, himself.

"Do you want to know anything else?—Shall I tell you the man's name?"

He made an inarticulate sound.

"No!—I don't want to know who he was—not now, anyhow!—I want to forget the whole thing.—But damn it, I can't! Where's the child?"

"I keep it up in the country."

"What is it—boy or girl?—How old is it?"

"It's a little boy. He's nearly four years old. His name is David."

"Does the father help support it?"

"No."

"Didn't you try to make him?"

"I wrote to him after the child was born, but he never answered. He didn't know I was going to have it, you see. Perhaps he didn't get the letter. Anyhow, I read how he was married not long afterward."

"The dog!"

"I don't lay it up against him, Simon. I don't suppose he was much more to blame than I was, except that he was older.—Is there anything else?"

"You say the father didn't know about it?—Did anybody?—How did you keep people from finding out—?"

"The only person was my mother. She was grand, Simon! She stuck to me like a brick.—I was all alone down in the country with my grandfather at the time, and when the doctor said what was the matter I thought I should die. It was too terrible!"

"Poor child! It must have been! What did you do?"

"I told mother, and she took me out to Chicago, and

we stayed near there until the baby was born. There was a little money left over from my father's estate, which came in at that time, and the folks at home thought we had gone to Europe. We never went back to Bayville. After we left Chicago, mother and I moved up to New York and took this apartment. Nobody knows anything about it. In that way I was very fortunate, but it was the most awful year of my life. You can't imagine how I suffered from the fear of disgrace and the pain—and everything."

"Yes,—I know! It must have been fierce!"

Tears came into Simon's eyes. After all, Clarice had been only seventeen when the child was born!—She was so frank and honest about it!—So lovely!

"The strange part is," she went on, "that I hardly ever think of it now. It's all over and done with. It's almost as if it had happened to some one else and not to me," she said, looking at him. "And, if it were not for you, Simon, I shouldn't particularly regret it. Of course, if I'd known I was going to meet you afterward, I should never have done it. But how could I have known? It may have been wrong, but at most it has left only a scar—a scar that has healed—just as you said."

"Do you ever see this man? Or hear from him?" he demanded.

"Of course not!—I don't even know where he is. It is as if he had never existed, so far as I am concerned."

"Suppose you ever met him?"

"I shouldn't care one way or the other. It would be a matter of complete indifference to me."

Simon lit a cigarette and stood up.

"I've got to think this out," he said, in his ordinary tone. "In the first place, I want you to know, Clarice, that I don't blame you for what you've done, or hold it up

against you in any way. You had an absolute right to do so, if you saw fit, without criticism from me or anybody else. And I admire and respect your honesty and courage in telling me—more than I can say. It makes me think more of you than ever! And, for all I know, the experience may have done you good. Maybe it is one of the reasons why I love you so. Anyhow, it's a part of you."

He took a few whiffs from the cigarette, tossed it into the grate, and, sitting down beside her upon the sofa, took her hands in his.

"The only question, so far as our marriage is concerned, is whether or not, in spite of my way of looking at it, I am going to be able to put this thing behind me and forget it, so that sometime it won't come between us. A theory which seems all right for other people might knock one's own life blooey. It makes a big difference whose ox is gored. I might think—as I do right now—that I could just say: 'That's all right, Clarice. We'll never speak of it again,' and yet find that however hard I tried not to, I would always see a ghost sitting at our fireside. I know it's beastly for me to talk this way!—I know it's silly and inconsistent!—but I've got to be honest, too. No matter what my expressed ideas on these matters may have been—or are, for that matter—I'd give everything I have in the world if it hadn't happened to you." He squeezed her hand, leaned over, and kissed her.

"So would I, Simon!" she said. "But it *has* happened. It's up to you what to do. Whatever you decide I know will be right. How unfortunate it is that we can't look ahead and see what's coming in our lives! I never imagined that I would meet anybody that I could love as I do you, Simon. I never imagined that love

could be half as wonderful and beautiful as it is. And whichever way you decide, I shall always love you!"

Her mouth quivered. Her eyes shone with love, through her tears. Simon took her in his arms. He forgot everything—but Clarice!

§ 6

Yet, once beyond the personal enchantment of her beauty, the soothing hypnotism of her low, drawling voice, the intoxication of her soft arms, and the shadowy hollows in her creamy throat, his original doubts returned to haunt him like evil imps. As he slouched along the deserted avenue he had a vision of Clarice caressing the cheeks of some other man unknown, lifting her mouth to his, sighing with closed eyes, her head thrown back to receive his fiery caresses. Hell! Why had she told him? What was the use of it? Why inject such poison into their happiness? Had she really told him out of a sense of duty, of fair play,—or only to relieve her conscience of a burden which she had thereby shifted to him? Had it been courage or cowardice? Perhaps she had feared ultimate discovery, and had taken this means to forestall and neutralize its effect. Anyhow, he wished to God that she hadn't told him!

Jealousy, that tyrant of the mind, tormented him. He recalled having heard that a woman never ceases to love the man who first possessed her. The thought made him writhe. He had only her word for it that she no longer saw her lover. Who was this fellow? Was he a man of her own class in society or some husky navvy or mechanic? Was he young or old? Did he have a mustache? Where and how had she met him? And why, if

he were a gentleman, had he not married her?—Could she perhaps not have wanted to marry *him?* No, she must have wanted to legitimatize her child.

He wished now that he had asked the man's name and all about him. If the child were to come into his life—if he were to share in any way in its responsibility—he ought to know its full parentage, ought he not? Yet, he perceived plainly enough that that was not his real reason. He only wanted to know, so that he could satisfy his curiosity, and get even with the low-down dog sometime, maybe! He scrutinized the face of every wayfarer he passed, asking himself if her lover could have been a man like that. And as each face conjured up to his agonized imagination a picture more revolting than the last, he beat his hands muttering, "Christ! Why did she tell me?"

With Othello he might well have said:

> "What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust?
> I saw 't not, thought it not, it harmed not me:
> I slept the next night well, was free and merry;
> I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips.
> He that is robbed, not wanting what is stol'n,
> Let him not know 't and he 's not robbed at all.
> I had been happy, if the general camp,
> Pioners and all, had tasted her sweet body,
> So I had nothing known. O, now, for ever
> Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!"

He recalled now the readiness with which Clarice had permitted his first advances. At the time he had only thought it charming and naïve; but now he began to wonder how far she had gone with others. What she had permitted him she had doubtless allowed to many. Was she a wanton? Was this of which she had told him her only affair? Or, if it was her only one, had she not

had other experiences equally damning from every viewpoint of morality? Had she really told him the truth about herself? Or had she merely built a backfire to screen and counteract the deadly truth of a more lurid past? Tennyson's lines sang in his poor tortured brain:

"That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

"Damn him!—Damn him!—Damn him!" he cried aloud. "O, Clarice! How could you! How could you!"

Unexpectedly he discovered that he was shivering on a bench in Washington Square. His face was on fire, although the rest of his body was like ice. He had no recollection of passing the Arch or of sitting down. It was half past two.

"This won't do!" he said to himself. "Got to have some sense!"

He walked over to Sixth Avenue and, at a night-lunch, bought a cup of coffee and a "hot-dog" which he munched perched alongside a cross-eyed newsboy, a man carrying a saxophone, and a negro in a glossy tall hat.

"Now see here!" he continued to mutter. "No use having the tee-wees! Just get a grip on yourself.—You haven't been thinking. You've been having a brainstorm! Start all over again!—Begin now!"

He had a second cup of coffee and shared his last two cigarettes with the saxophone-player. Then he turned up his coat-collar and started out into the night again, without regard to where he was going. His mind, aided by the digestive process, cleared. He was no longer attracted by the idea of either murder or suicide. He was merely a man with a problem which demanded a

solution, just like any other, and which probably was not much more complicated than those he dealt with every day, provided he could bring his powers of reason to bear upon it dispassionately. He was not married to Clarice, and he was perfectly free not to marry her. He was not committed. Clarice loved him. There was no hurry. He had merely to make up his mind whether or not he wanted to marry her, knowing what he did.

But nothing was more obvious than that he did want to marry her. Her disclosure had not affected his desires in the least. Somehow he seemed to want her all the more. Why shouldn't he marry her? That she had had a sexual experience before she had met him should not disqualify her any more than his own minor pecadilloes unfitted him to make her a faithful husband. She had simply had bad luck. It was no more against her than if she were a widow or a divorcée. She was no strumpet. She was a noble woman who, merely for the sake of telling him the truth, had been willing to hazard all her chance of future happiness. Surely that outweighed everything else. In view of their frequent discussions upon the subject of sex, there was no need for her to have said anything. She could have tucked the child away in a foundling asylum and he need never have heard of its existence. She could have "stood pat" and, if he had ever learned the facts, could have justified herself by the assertion that she was familiar with his attitude, naturally assumed that her past would afford no ground for a change of mind on his part, and had kept silent in order to save him possible unhappiness. Hers had been a genuine "declaration against interest." It was the outstanding fact that illuminated her whole character. No matter what she had done—and she had been hardly more than a child—she was essentially fine!

"No, by gosh!—Clarice is all right!" he declared as he tramped south along the darkened chasm of Broadway. "She needn't have told me. She's a brick—a good little sport!—Just because she had a baby—was too decent to take those precautions—isn't anything against her. It's in her favor. Plenty of girls get into trouble through no real fault of their own. It's the men who get around them. I'd rather have a girl warm-hearted and impulsive than to stay straight merely out of caution. What is being straight anyhow? Doesn't the Bible say 'whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her' is an adulterer? Then we're a race of adulterers and every musical revue is a bawdy house!"

He reflected upon this for a considerable period, concluding that, when all was said, there was little to choose between women; that everything was just a question of degree anyway. Look at all the "petting" that went on. Most men were on the lookout to take advantage of girls who were "easy." It was a marvel these days if any of them stayed straight. A fellow who loved a girl would be a brute to lay up against her what he might, in a way, be partially responsible for.

Unfortunately, these reflections upon the weaknesses of womankind precipitated a reaction, and by the time he had reached Canal Street he was wondering whether a man could afford to take a chance on a girl who had slipped like that. Of course, she'd be everlastingly grateful to him for marrying her, and that would be an anchor to windward. And she'd have had a damn good lesson! It was better to have a woman step out a little before she got married, rather than afterward. But suppose you married a girl who had had a lover and then didn't get on with her? Wouldn't you always be thinking that maybe she would go back to him? Wouldn't there al-

ways be the shadow of a third person between you? And on your heart?

It was at about this stage in the proceedings—that is to say in the neighborhood of City Hall Park and the brilliantly glowing cupola of the World Building—that the devil came to Simon,—a silk-hatted devil, wearing an opera-coat and a gardenia—asking why he should bother to marry Clarice at all, if that other man hadn't. She was not in a position to expect marriage. She believed in freedom and independence for women. Why not take her at her word,—just as she was holding him to his? And there would be no permanent bond, no difficulty about the child, no candy-fiend of a mother-in-law, no domestic complications, no expense—except what he chose to spend upon her. He could take her out two or three nights a week and devote the money which would otherwise be used for housekeeping to giving her a good time. They could take in the theatres and night clubs, motor out to the better class road-houses on the Hudson and Merrick Road, and perhaps sneak off for an occasional Sunday at Atlantic City.

But by the time he had crossed Fulton Street the idea made him sick. She was not that sort of a woman! She was, by every honest standard, a pure woman! If he sank to anything like that, he would be worse than her seducer. Besides, even if it were not discreditable, that was not the sort of relationship he desired. He loved her. He did not want her for a mistress, but for a wife and companion,—not merely to see her on Wednesday and Saturday evenings, but every instant that he could be with her,—at breakfast, lunch, and dinner,—to kiss her the last thing before turning off the lights, and gaze upon her drowsy golden beauty each morning of his life. He wanted her to be always at his side or awaiting his

return, greeting him gaily, soothing his irritations, comforting him in his discouragements, eager for his account of the day's news, sharing his triumphs, interested in everything pertaining to the office, giving him encouragement and counsel in his work, guarding him from unnecessary interruptions,—in a word, to be his beloved companion and to make a home for him and to bear him children; and, on his side, he wanted to give her everything, to work and win for her, to lay his laurels in her lap, and to feel her cool, caressing hands upon his brow. It must be that or nothing! Could she give it him?—Was she straight or wasn't she?—Damn it, what was she?

"O, Clarice! Clarice!"

Exhausted with fatigue, groggy for lack of sleep, he staggered on down Broadway. At long intervals, an empty surface-car would roar clanging by. The black buildings hemmed him in as in a crater. He was at the bottom of a pit,—a little human insect trying to crawl out.

He emerged at last into the circle of blue arcs at Battery Park. A chill wind was blowing off the bay. To his left loomed the custom-house, beyond him the tangled structure of the elevated terminal. A Staten Island ferryboat, blazing with light, warm, inviting, was hanging in the slip. Purchasing a ticket, he dragged himself on board, and sank down on an out-of-the-way bench—the only passenger in the otherwise empty saloon. And he dreamed that Clarice was in his arms, her lips fiercely against his!

§ 7

Cramped, he opened sticky eyelids, to find the seats about him occupied by stolid rows of newspaper-reading

men. The rays of a red sun fell through the stained windows upon the curling gray smoke from their cigars. "Shine, boss?" His shoes were caked with mud and he watched their renovation with some interest. He perceived that he must have spent several hours riding back and forth upon the boat. It was already eight o'clock when he reached the battery, and joined the crowd pouring off the slip up Broadway. But, in spite of his aching muscles and sore feet, he felt refreshed and, by the time he had finished breakfast at Childs, was able to look upon life with a normal balanced point of view. The Clarice business must be settled! The night before, it had seemed a blow from which he never could recover. Now he realized that it was merely an episode in a ceaselessly moving world on which he was but a transitory passenger, just as he had been on the ferry-boat.

He could hear Myer dictating raucously as he walked down the corridor to his office; could feel all about him that subtle palpitation, that subdued hum, as from a dynamo. The sunlight fell warm upon his back as he seated himself at his desk and lit a cigarette. Ranged on the top shelf of the bookcase was a collection of volumes from his working-library upon "Liberty." He fingered over his mail. Among the letters was one from a woman professor in Canton, Ohio, congratulating him upon his recently published essay on "The Equality of the Sexes," a summary of his chapter "The Subjection of Women."

"I am glad," she wrote, "that some one has at last dared frankly to take the bull by the horns and put into print a few plain truths. I feel sure that the walls of hypocrisy will be well shaken, even if they are not knocked flat, by the trumpet call of your logic and common sense."

In broad daylight it seemed preposterous even to

consider throwing over Clarice. What a dirty trick it would be, having lured her into a confession by inducing her to believe that he would condone her fault, to deliberately "chuck" her for it! He would be preaching doctrines for the benefit of other people, which he was too cowardly to practise himself. How could he go on with his work on Liberty, with the knowledge that he was a traitor to his own cause? It was his cause; they were his principles—were they not? Could he ever write again, unless he now demonstrated his own sincerity! Besides, she was an intellectual stimulus, a real help to him. Poor little Clarice! How she must have suffered! She had had a "raw deal"! He must do all that he could to compensate her for what she had been through. He did love her! And how she loved him! Her courage and honesty would be the shield and buckler of their happiness!

He called her up at ten o'clock when he knew she would be awake.

"It's all right, darling!" he assured her. "Everything's fine. I'll be up to see you a little after five."

All that day, after having made his decision, Simon was supremely happy.

He felt a momentary sinking of the heart while he waited for the negro to pilot down the wabbly elevator and open the front door, but all his doubts vanished as he put his arms about Clarice.

"O, Simon!—It's all too wonderful! Are you perfectly sure you want to marry me?"

"Perfectly! It is the one thing I do want!"

She kissed him passionately, over and over again.

"O, I just adore you, Simon! You are the most wonderful man I ever met!—I—I worship you, Simon!" There was worship in her eyes that glowed with a shy

and tender iridescence. He experienced a tremendous and exultant happiness. That he also felt a little like a hero did not detract from his satisfaction. There was no doubt that she loved him—really adored him, as she said.

"I was terribly upset last night when I saw how you suffered, Simon darling! But I had to tell you, didn't I? I couldn't do anything else. I should never have been happy, unless I had!—But I was afraid—frightened almost to death! Suppose I had lost you, darling? And now to think that it isn't going to make any difference—O, it's just too marvellous! God must intend us to be happy!—Are you sure you love me just the same?"

"Absolutely! I love you better than anything in the world!"

"O, Simon!"

"Clarice!—My Clarice!"

They stood there as one, gazing fondly at each other, oblivious to the trucks back-firing in the street below. Such sounds as reached their ears were but the songs of nightingales. Presently she pulled him to the Morris chair and climbed into his lap.

"I'm going to make you the happiest man in New York!" whispered Clarice, while she stroked his cheek with her hand. "I'm going to spend my time figuring out ways to help you. You're going to be the most famous lawyer in America, dear. Certainly you deserve to be. Everybody says you're so brilliant and such a beautiful speaker. And then look at the wonderful reviews of your articles! There's nothing too good for you!—Only you've got to work hard and not love me too much to interfere with your work! That would never do, my sweet! No, you must go right on with your book and get it finished up, so that people will know

how clever you are! Maybe you could run for mayor! Young mayors are always popular!—'Vote for Simon Kent, the boy wonder!' How does that sound?"

"Rotten!" said Simon. "I don't want to run for anything."

"We-ll!" she protested. "But anyway you're going to be a great big man, and know everybody, and be on all the committees, and go down on the tugs to welcome famous people. It's just going to be too marvellous, Simon!—And evenings I'll sew on my tapestry and read, while you work on your book. I know so little compared to you, darling! And I do so want to be a credit to you and not have you ashamed of your poor little foolish Clarice!"

He cut short her self-depreciation with a kiss. No need for Clarice to do anything. He was the happiest man in the world already. Was it possible that this exquisite, ravishingly beautiful creature was his?

"O, I forgot all about mother!" she suddenly exclaimed in a contrite tone. "Poor mother!"

"What's the matter with her?" he inquired.

"Don't you want to tell her?"

"Sure!" agreed Simon heartily.

Clarice ran into the adjoining room and returned leading her mother by the hand. Mrs. Hungerford was very much dressed up in embroidered crêpe de Chine, and presented an appearance extraordinarily different from her usual frowsiness. She had clearly been waiting to be sent for, like some elderly actress listening from the wings for her cue, to bestow her maternal benediction upon the reunited lovers kneeling before the footlights. "Bless you my children!" She was quite tremulous and watery as she kissed Simon upon his forehead and hoped that he would take good care of her "baby," and he was

surprised at the realization that, after their first few meetings, he had practically forgotten her existence. Now he noticed that, standing, her figure was rather like that of Clarice; it was only their faces that were different.

"You're a very lucky man, even if I am her mother!" she sniffed, and Simon caught a whiff of winter-green. "O, dear! I shall so miss my pretty! Just think of it! We have never been separated for hardly a single night in twenty-three years! I do hope you'll be kind to her! O, I know you will! I'm sure she'll make a wonderful wife for you! She's so interested in all your work, and she's told me all about your wonderful book. You must read it to me sometime.—How soon do you plan to be getting married?"

Both Clarice and her mother seemed to take it for granted that he was fully able to support her, and, since in his own opinion such was the case, Simon saw no necessity for raising the point, and was urgent that they be married as soon as possible. The question of the ultimate disposition of Clarice's child was allowed to go by default, since he assumed that she was satisfied with the provision already made for it and that its future was a matter which could be taken up to better advantage after their marriage, rather than while they were both properly concerned with their own immediate domestic arrangements. Mother Hungerford, too, for the time being faded from the picture. She evidently had no expectation of being invited to live with them, and allowed it to be somewhat unintelligibly understood that she planned "to sort of drift along for a while and do some travelling maybe." She'd always wanted to see Paris and London and pick up a little foreign culture. So many nice people were taking those tours now! Simon

encouraged this idea as much as possible and surreptitiously caused her to be supplied with quantities of highly-colored and profusely illustrated booklets featuring picturesque trips to Morocco, the Near East, and the "Land of the Midnight Sun."

He spent a gala afternoon with Clarice buying her an engagement ring, and finally chose one composed of a circle of tiny sapphires and diamonds, at the modest cost of three hundred dollars. Clarice at first was all for a church wedding and "asking everybody," but when Simon explained that, being a stranger in New York, he had very few friends and that most of those were not of the social variety, her enthusiasm somewhat waned. It was, after all, a tremendous lot of trouble and expense, she conceded, and she saw no reason why they should go into it merely for the sake of the Hungerford connection. Of course, Muriel might think it a little queer if they were not married in a church, but who cared? Simon got a very definite impression that what Clarice did was a matter of vital concern to her smart relatives, particularly to her Cousin Muriel.

"Do exactly as you think best, darling," he told her. "So long as we are legally married, I don't care a hoot who performs the ceremony—whether it's an archbishop or an alderman!"

"Neither do I, really! It's only for the look of the thing. If you have only half-a-dozen or so whom you really want to invite, I can cut down my list, so that perhaps, with a little crowding, we can get them all into the apartment. It would be ever so much simpler, wouldn't it?"

"I doubt if I've got even half-a-dozen that I'd care much about having," he answered, running them off, mentally beginning with Otto and Davis. "Of course, I

have a good many classmates, but as a rule men don't like to go to any weddings except their own, and some of them hate even to do that. And the girls I know are mostly just kids I've met out at dinners and dances and haven't seen again."

"How about your partners?"

"My who?"

"Your partners? Mr. Robinson, Mr. Myer, and all the others on your letter-head."

Simon laughed.

"They're not my partners, sweetheart! Old Robinson wouldn't recognize me if he saw me—probably doesn't know I'm in his office. And Myer would think I was fresh as hell, if I asked him to my wedding—that is if I made a point of his coming. He wouldn't do it!—Besides, I wouldn't want him or any of them.—Come to think of it, there is one chap in the office I'd like to ask. I don't suppose he'd come."

"Who is it?"

"A fellow named Hepper—funny little red-nosed guy, the chief clerk. But he's a wow!"

Clarice was obviously disappointed.

"Well, come to think of it, I haven't got so many I want to invite, either. Of course, I'd have to have all the Hungerfords, but there's only my two aunts, and the three boys and Muriel. I suppose I ought to ask her to be maid-of-honor, although I'd much rather have somebody else. And I don't imagine she'd care such a lot if I didn't. But I *would* like to have some of my friends from 'Rosemary,' and there's Anna Clayton and Doris Menken and Flora Bingham—I'd have to ask their mothers and they'd all come! Still, I guess we can jam them all in, on a pinch.—Let's have it at the apartment! Shall we?"

It suited Simon perfectly, and he said so. Once it was over, it wouldn't make the slightest difference to either of them in his opinion, where they had been married. Where they were going to live afterward was vastly more important.

Their first day's search for an apartment which should be at once "possible" and within their means, proved discouraging. Simon was clearly of the opinion that out of his salary of five thousand they ought not to pay more than a thousand or, at most, twelve hundred for rent; but Clarice thought that the ones they looked at were all too awful. They had started out bravely, in the confidence of ignorance, answering alluring advertisements of apartment-houses on Park Avenue and in the upper part of the city, to find, to their disappointment, that the cheapest one in which Clarice would consider living rented for twenty-two hundred a year.

"We don't have to live on Fifth Avenue or at the Ritz," Simon tried to cheer her. "There must be thousands of apartments for a hundred a month. Where do you suppose all the chauffeurs live!"

"But you're not a chauffeur, Simon!" protested Clarice.

"I don't make as much as a master plumber!" he retorted. "Say, what's the matter with a flat in the same house you live in now?"

"O, Simon! Don't you think we ought to be able to afford something a little nicer? It's frightfully dingy."

"It's never seemed dingy to me!" he retorted gallantly. "I guess with you in it I wouldn't mind where it was or how it looked!"

Clarice gave him a tender look.

"You're *such* a dear, Simon!"

§ 8

"It's not that I want anything swell, but I'd like something just the least little bit smart,—if you know what I mean," explained Clarice when he met her at the Ritz the next Saturday for lunch. "I'm sure the way one lives makes a lot of difference about getting clients. Lawyers are like doctors that way. We ought to be able to entertain our friends—very quietly, of course—and restaurants are so expensive; it would be a real economy in the end. I'd rather cut down on something else than live in the slums. I don't care how tiny it is,—but I do hope we can find something on the East Side between 72d and 79th Streets.—If we can't, it might be better to live at a hotel."

"Wouldn't that cost a lot more than a flat?"

"O, it doesn't cost nearly as much to stay at a hotel as to keep house—even in an apartment."

The discussion was terminated by the nervous tapping of the head-waiter's pencil, but the latter's aloof expression melted when Clarice with a starry smile asked him what he would suggest their ordering. Between them they selected a delicious lunch.

Mr. Oswald Bibby, the young man from the real-estate office, who took them around in a taxi, was very attentive to Clarice and patient with Simon. Apparently his time was theirs and he had nothing in the world to do but show them apartments. Simon was a little surprised at Clarice's manner of approach, which seemed to him more like that of a young lady of fashion, with unlimited means, than that of the wife of a struggling law clerk on a salary.

"We might as well let him show us what there is," she

whispered, in answer to his mute protest. "It doesn't cost us anything, and we'll get an idea——"

But the only idea that Simon got was that an apartment such as would really suit Clarice would cost about eighteen thousand dollars a year.

"I'm afraid that is more than it would be worth while for us to pay—for what we want," she said charmingly, as they emerged from a fifteen-story marble palace on 74th Street. "We're only looking, you see, for a mere *pied à terre*. It might almost be better for us to give up the idea of a real apartment altogether, stay out in the country, and just have a couple of rooms where we could spend the night when we were in town. How would you like that, Simon? A sort of kitchenette effect?"

Simon, bewildered, thought a kitchenette would be all right. Unfortunately, the price of the first one they looked at—although it was a bargain, owing to the fact that the tenant, who was going to Europe, wanted to sublet—was thirty-three hundred a year.

Nevertheless, in spite of the disheartening outlook, they made a jolly game of it, and Clarice "vamped" little Mr. Bibby, until he became her intimate friend and invited them to have tea with him at the Plaza. He swore that by Tuesday noon, at the very latest, he would find exactly what they wanted, for not more than twelve hundred a year. In fact—by George! he had the very thing,—if they did not mind something furnished! Archie Carew was going to Aiken for the rest of the season and would turn over his bachelor-apartment, including his man servant—an excellent chap—for a mere song. Simon was on the point of repudiating any sort of butler, when Clarice signalled to him.

"O, how nice! It might be exactly what we want!"

She was so entirely normal as they walked back to the

flat, after bidding good-bye to their new friend, that Simon nearly refrained from saying, as he did:

"What made you hand Bibby all that line? He's probably got the idea now that we're millionaires! We're just wasting his time and ours riding around and looking at all these imperial suites. And we let him pay for all the taxis, besides."

"That's part of his business," answered Clarice. "His firm is looking for clients, just like everybody else. We wouldn't have got any service at all if he'd thought at the outset that we only expected to pay twelve or fifteen hundred a year. I tried to let him down easy.—Now he's delighted to do anything he can for us.—Wouldn't he possibly make a client for you, Simon?"

"I don't want him!"

"But one thing leads to another."

"I don't want to be always thinking about whether I'm going to get business out of people." He sounded antagonistic and she hastily placated him with:

"It's only because I want to help you to succeed, darling! At first one has to consider everything. It isn't as if you were going to work for somebody else forever. You'll have your own office before long, and you'll want clients of your own, too.—You ought not to throw any chance away!"

"Bibby's a swell chance!" he growled.

"How can you tell? He may be a terribly rich young man just starting in business. Anyhow, he dresses beautifully. Some day he'll need a lawyer, even if it's only to draw his will. Besides, he must have a family of some sort. And friends. Perhaps they're swells. Even if he couldn't send you any business of his own, he might send others to you. You mustn't take such a high and mighty stand, Simon dear. It's better to make friends than enemies of people."

"You can have him!"

Clarice giggled.

"The poor little dear didn't know whether he was on his head or his heels,—did he!"

§ 9

That Clarice should have conveyed such a false impression as to their circumstances troubled Simon not a little as he walked home to Mrs. McGowan's, after taking her to the theatre that evening. It was the first time that he had known her to vary from strict truth, and it gave rise to a series of unsettling conjectures. He knew that Clarice was fundamentally honest, for he had had the most convincing proof of it, but that she could so easily dissemble, threw a new light upon her character. Were all women like that? Was it possibly their inherited instinct for self-protection unconsciously operating whenever they approached the other sex on the latter's peculiar ground? His mother would never have pretended, as Clarice had done that afternoon, to be anything that she was not. Still, Clarice was so much younger! After all, she hadn't told any literal untruths —it was only part of the social game, like saying you were "not at home" when you really were. He must not be hypercritical, make mountains out of mole-hills. He had thrown plenty of bluffs himself, at one time or another!

Nevertheless, Simon did not go yelping up the stairs of Mrs. McGowan's, or shout the glad tidings from below, or dance a jig around the room, or clap a waste-paper basket upon his head, when he confided his engagement to his friend Otto. On the contrary, he ascended to his room soberly, seriously, a little defiantly. Otto was

"grinding" as usual at his desk. He did not turn round.

"Hello, Red. Home early this evening! What's matter? Too much 'liberty'? Or are you sick?"

Simon removed his coat and hat, methodically hung them up, and, sitting down in the big rocker, took out his pipe and filled it.

"Well, you old bum," he said, after he had taken several long puffs—"will it jar you to learn that I'm going to get married?"

Otto swivelled from his desk.

"What?—You? Come off!"

"I'm the sucker."

Otto grabbed his hand.

"Then I s'pose congratulations are in order! Sorry I can't offer you a drink! I *am* glad, old top,—if she's the right girl. What's her name?"

Simon was tantalizingly deliberate.

"The young lady's name," he stated, "is Miss Clarice Hungerford of New York City."

Otto's hand dropped.

"Clarice Hungerford?"

"Exactly."

"You mean Orrin Hungerford's daughter—of Bayville, Long Island?"

"That's the one. Do you know her?"

Otto reseated himself. He looked distressed and worried.

"Well?" remarked Simon. "I can't say you seem very enthusiastic."

"Frankly, I'm not."

"What's the matter?" snapped Simon. "Isn't she swell enough for you?"

Otto gazed miserably at the friend who, from his point of view, was about to commit moral suicide. He loved

Simon as he loved no other human being, knew all his weaknesses, his small vices, his great qualities of loyalty, kindness, and courage.

"Don't be sore, old man! You know it isn't that. I wouldn't care *who* she was, if only—" he broke off.

"Well?" demanded Simon in a voice of ice.

"If I thought she was good enough for you," concluded Otto lamely.

"Ever meet her?"

"Yes—a few times at the office."

"What have you got against her?"

Otto twisted his fingers white. It was the hardest position he had ever found himself in.

"Well!" he said. "Maybe she's all right. You know her better than I do. Very likely I'm not entitled to an opinion, in the premises. I just don't happen to think much of her—her immediate family, that's all. Judge Furman represents the Hungerford Estate—and in that way I know a lot about them—about all of them. Orrin Hungerford was a sort of black sheep,—a good-natured, easy-going booze-fighter who liked to shoot and to drink, and his brothers put him on a small allowance and farmed him out at Bayville, where he could do all he wanted to of both, without hurting anybody. He used to live at The Seaside Hotel, a ramshackle sort of place frequented by bird-hunters and run by an ex-pugilist named Tim Martin. Once a month they let him come up to New York with Martin and get drunk. Maybe you know all this?"

"No. Never heard it. Go ahead."

"Martin had a daughter, Selma, a girl of about twenty-five when Hungerford first went there. From what I've heard, she didn't amount to much. I suppose she regarded Hungerford as a catch. Thought at least

she'd be close to money and wear the name of a millionaire. Anyhow, he married her and they went on living with her father. Clarice is their daughter.—You can see why I'm not overjoyed at the prospect."

Otto reached for his pipe. His account threw light on much that had been hitherto obscure to Simon.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"So far, everything I have told you is common knowledge," answered Otto. "I haven't told you anything you couldn't have found out for yourself. So is the fact that Miss Hungerford, after her father died, was brought up by her mother and grandfather, at the Seaside Hotel. The family continue to her mother the allowance they gave to her father while he was living. I don't know what their attitude is toward the daughter.—And there you are!"

"I don't see that you have said anything to Miss Hungerford's discredit," replied Simon stubbornly. "Or offered any adequate reason why I shouldn't marry her. On the contrary, that she has made herself what she is shows that she has unusual strength of character. She is a very remarkable girl, Otto. You'll recognize it in a moment when you've seen her once. I don't care a damn for her family-tree. But if you've really got anything against Clarice, go on and get it off your chest. Say anything you like."

"That's all I can tell you," said Otto.

"You mean you know something else?"

"Whatever I do know I have learned in a confidential capacity—as one of the attorneys for the family. I can add this, however, that Miss Hungerford's reputation in Bayville was not exactly what might be called of the best."

"You mean that she didn't bear a good character?"

Otto reddened.

"You've said it," he replied laconically.

"Would that keep you from marrying a girl whom you really loved and trusted?" demanded Simon. "You know how unfair village gossip is. If a girl slips they tear her limb from limb. Very likely the people in Bayville resented the marriage, in the first place."

"They did. They thought that Tim Martin's daughter, after her marriage to Orrin Hungerford, put on airs."

"Do you know anything more?"

"I know enough to beg you not to go ahead with this," pleaded Otto. "Why man, you're crazy to think of it!—You'll ruin your whole life!—Why not marry some girl that you know all about? I guess you could find plenty that would be glad of the chance!"

Simon's face had grown sad. His eyes were very tender. He seemed to be looking far beyond Otto, as he said gently:

"I know all about Clarice. I know her whole story. She told me herself."

"She told you!—And yet you are going to marry her?"

"Because she was brave enough to tell me is one of the reasons why I am going to marry her."

Otto wrung his hands.

"I give it up!" he groaned.—"You're a good fellow, Simon, but—you're a damn fool!"

"You have a right to think so, and I suppose you may think our friendship gives you the right to say so," retorted Simon coldly, "but it's my affair and I don't care to hear any more reflections on the girl I'm going to marry!"

"I'm sorry, Red! I know how you must feel. I didn't mean to be offensive. But you can't know all that I know."

"I couldn't possibly know more! Clarice has told me absolutely everything connected with her past—except the name of the father of her child—and that I don't want to know. Is that what you're referring to?"

"No.—I don't know anything about it, except the bare fact."

"Then what do you mean by saying that I can't know all you know. It seems to me that I know a great deal more. Tell me what you mean—if you mean anything!"

Otto compressed his lips.

"I can't say any more. If, in spite of what I say and what you know already, you insist on marrying Clarice Hungerford, go ahead! I wash my hands of the whole business!"

"Well, I'm going to marry her!"

"All right, marry her!"

They glared at one another. Simon gave a grim laugh.

"I was going to ask you to be my best man, but I guess it's no use now."

Otto got up and stood with his hand on Simon's shoulder.

"Thanks, Simon, but I couldn't. You have a right to marry any one you please. As you say, it is your affair. I hope it will turn out happily for both of you, and I'll do anything I can to make it a success. But after the way I've talked, and considering how I feel, you'd better get somebody else. It—it would be—*embarrassing!*"

"All right, Otto!" answered Simon. "Will you come to the wedding?"

"Where is it going to be?"

"It isn't settled definitely. At Mrs. Hungerford's apartment probably."

"I'd rather not go to Mrs. Hungerford's apartment."

Simon stood up.

"Otto! I think you're insulting! Have you got anything against my future mother-in-law?"

"Nothing."

"Well, why in hell——!"

"I'd find it embarrassing!" reiterated Otto feebly.

"Just as you like!" Simon started toward the bedroom. "I'll be moving out before the end of the month," he said over his shoulder.

"I'm sorry, old man. I think I'd better move out to-morrow, myself!" said Otto.

§ 10

At their meeting with the real-estate agent next day, Clarice managed to find something about Archie Carew's apartment that did not exactly suit her and to put it in such a way that poor Mr. Bibby was quite upset for fear that he had exaggerated its attractiveness.

"I know exactly what you want," he assured her almost penitently, "and I could find it for you all right—in half a minute—if it was only April, instead of January. This is the off season—too late for winter, too early for spring. Later on——"

"'If winter comes, can spring be far behind'?" laughed Clarice, and Simon was once more impressed at her extraordinary cleverness. "Do you really think that you could find me what I want, if we wait?"

"I'm sure of it!" Mr. Bibby's ardent confidence conveyed the distinct impression that, if he failed to find exactly what she needed, he would gladly pay himself the additional rent necessary to procure something to satisfy her.

"How long would I have to wait?"

"A month or six weeks. Not more than a couple of months at the outside. And, of course, we might find something almost immediately—to-morrow even—if you could make shift in the meantime." Mr. Bibby looked embarrassed. "I have a fairly decent place, myself,—if you could manage to be comfortable in it, I'd be glad to move out——"

"Nonsense! We couldn't think of such a thing," roughly interrupted Simon, not knowing whether to regard the offer as an evidence of Mr. Bibby's Christian self-sacrifice or of the pagan spell cast over him by Clarice.

"Oh, how perfectly sweet of you!" She enveloped Mr. Bibby in a sunburst of gratitude. "But of course, it's quite out of the question. After all,—we can manage for a few weeks."

She allowed Mr. Bibby to infer that in the meantime she and Simon would try to get along at the Ritz or the St. Regis, or somewhere, until he could run down exactly what she wanted. On his part, Mr. Bibby promised to keep his eye out and, the instant he sighted anything, to communicate with her—at the Ritz or the St. Regis or wherever she might happen to be.

"He'll get us something—if he has to build us an apartment-house himself!" declared Clarice, after Mr. Bibby had paid the check—they had been having tea at the Biltmore this time—and dragged himself away. "That's why it pays to be nice to people."

"That's all right, but where are we going to live?"

She gave him one of her shyly radiant smiles.

"It doesn't matter where we live, does it, darling!" she said. "Dance with me?"

With his arms about her, Simon forgot everything except her nearness. He was an awkward performer but

with Clarice's promptings and pokings he continued to avoid any very damaging collisions.

"Well," he said, as they sat down again, "I'll be alone after to-night, I guess. My room-mate is checking out."

Clarice paused in adjusting her scarf.

"For good?"

"Yes."

"How many rooms are there?"

"A double bedroom, a sitting-room and a sort of dressing-room."

"How many flights up?"

"Two."

"Why shouldn't I move in?" asked Clarice gaily.

"Do you really mean it? It's a pretty rough old dump!"

"Of course I mean it! I think it might be great fun—for a while anyhow. And it would save having to get our own meals.—Let's go and look at it!"

She was in high spirits as they rode down-town in the taxi and Simon was delighted at her readiness to adapt herself. After all, she said, it did no harm to try to get what one wanted, but if you couldn't, the only thing to do was to make the best of it. They would be happy anywhere.

"I think it's a perfectly dear old house!" she cried as they drew up in front of the Château McGowan.

"Not so bad!—In its day this was the court end of the town."

Ora and Emmeline were not visible and the Pennycuicks' apartment was tight shut as he led her up the stairs.

"There!" he exclaimed, as he threw open the door. "Behold your future home!"

It was dark save for a single gas-jet, and while Simon lighted the lamps, Clarice made a rapid survey.

"I can do a lot with this!" she declared. "All we need is a little chintz and a few good prints—that's a rhyme, isn't it?

"A little chintz—
A few good prints"

"It sure is!

'And thou
Beside me singing in the wilderness—
O wilderness were paradise enow!'"

he finished.

"How sweet of you!" She put up her lips to be kissed. "Yes, it will be paradise!—Let's look at the bedroom!"

"Sure!"

He led the way through the dank passage to the rear, and pushed open the door.

Otto was standing in front of his bureau, stuffing a pile of shirts into a suitcase.

"Hello!" said Simon. "I'd no idea you were here. I've brought Miss Hungerford up to show her how the other half lives."

Clarice stopped short in the doorway.

"Why how amusing!" she exclaimed. "Is Mr. Wiegand your room-mate?"

If she experienced any embarrassment at her unexpected meeting with Otto, she failed to show it after the first thirty seconds, and she turned what might have been a contretemps into a little passage of raillery in which she pretended that her conscience disturbed her for being the cause of Otto's sudden departure and begged him not to lay it up against her.

"O, I'm the same going as I am coming!" grumbled Otto, as he strove to close the suitcase.

"Of course! O–T–T–O!" laughed Clarice as they retired to the front room. "How funny! Why didn't you tell me that your room-mate was Mr. Wiegand?"

"I thought you knew!"

"You always spoke of him merely as Otto and I knew him only by his last name."

"Well, he's a great old Ot."

"I think he's awfully nice. He's like a solemn, yellow old Chinaman. I shall call him Confucius!"

She was unusually affectionate in the taxi and as she nestled against him Simon had never been more in love with her. What a brick she was! His good fortune seemed simply incredible. His real career was just beginning—with Clarice—his beautiful, his sweet, stimulating Clarice—beside him. Was she really, really there? He bent back her head and kissed her mouth.

"O, Simon!" she gasped, freeing her lips. "Why do we wait? Why do we bother with any stupid wedding or invitations or clergymen or cake? Why don't we just slip off quietly by ourselves and get married without any fuss?"

"I think that would be great.—When?"

"Right off!—To-night!"

The suggestion dazzled him, but there were certain practical considerations.

"Do you think your mother would approve?"

"O, she'll like it. I'll tell her, of course."

"Don't you want a honeymoon?"

"I only want to be with you, my sweet. Couldn't we just go somewhere for to-night and then move right in to your rooms?"

"I guess so. It's too late to get a license at City Hall to-day, though. The office closes at four."

"How about going out of town, to one of those places you read about? Greenwich or Nyack or—or White Plains?"

"I don't know anything about them. I suppose I could find out. We'd have to get there, somehow."

"Haven't you some friend who's got a motor?"

The only friend thus blessed whom he could remember was Davis and for some reason the thought of allowing Davis to share so intimately in their happiness did not appeal to him, but Clarice was now importunate. Nothing but an immediate marriage would satisfy her.

"That's the thing! and we'll have to have witnesses! So you get somebody with a motor and I'll call up Doris Menken, or Clara Bingham, and ask her to go along. Then we'll go somewhere for supper, and then—" Clarice turned away her face—"then we can just go to the Waldorf or the Astor."

§ 11

Clarice and Simon were married that same evening, after a frantic search for a marriage license, at Port Chester, N. Y., in the back parlor of Alderman Michael McGee, a genial official, with dirty fingernails and a carbuncle. In the presence of Miss Doris Menken, a hectic young woman in a worn fur coat dangling with tails, and that of the immaculate Mr. Davis Pettibone, they promised to love and honor one another, and to abide with one another lovingly and loyally until death did them part, while Doris sobbed softly and the Victor on the floor above rasped out a dialect story entitled "Dat's all de news dey is."

Alderman McGee read an abbreviated ritual of his own invention, constructed from excerpts of what he called the "vital" parts of the Episcopal service, from

a frayed note-book which he took from his vest-pocket. The only aspects of the ceremony to which Simon seriously objected were the unctuous solemnity with which McGee, having told them to "close yer oyes," invoked the divine blessing, the smell from the cigar which he had left burning on the mantelpiece in the next room, and the fact that he insisted on kissing the bride, a feature gallantly participated in by Davis.

They stopped at the "Dew-Kum-Inn," a lantern-strung road-house near Pelham, where they were the only guests and where they waited an hour for the wedding breakfast—"our two-dollar-fifty lobster and chicken dinner"—while they occupied themselves by dancing to the radio. It was here that Davis nobly proved himself a man-of-the-world by ordering cocktails—more cocktails—and champagne, and by the time dinner was ready they had recovered their momentarily depressed spirits. It appeared that Alderman McGee had affected them all just the same way, and Davis was a perfect scream when he stood up—or tried to—and, with a soup-plate for a prayer-book, imitated the brogue of his basso profundo rendition of the service.

"Oi pronounce ye mahn and woife!—Plaze close yer oyes!"

The sharp air of the early January morning brought Simon to himself, as did the unwelcome familiarities of Miss Menken, who seemed to have confused her position with that of the bride, and, having abruptly dumped her at her flat, he borrowed a hundred dollars from Davis, transferred Clarice, together with their suitcases, to a taxi, and bade him good night.

"I'm so glad we didn't wait, aren't you, darling?" sighed Clarice, an hour later, as he joined her in her bedroom in their Waldorf suite.

There were tears in Simon's eyes as he pushed her red-gold hair back from her forehead.

"My sweetheart!" he said, gazing into her beautiful, inscrutable eyes. "My Clarice! My—wife!"

CHAPTER VI

§ 1

They did not, as a matter of fact, move into the rooms at Mrs. McGowan's until the following Monday week, and their stay at the Waldorf developed into much the same sort of a honeymoon as if they had been a country couple. Even Simon, in spite of the expense, was in no hurry to tear himself away, feeling that now if ever he was justified in splurging. He probably wouldn't ever be married again—! Why not cut loose for once? Clarice, owing to her inheritance, perhaps, seemed to take naturally to hotel life. She fitted into that *mise en scène* of elegance and beauty, by no means the least elegant and unquestionably the most beautiful woman there. He was immeasurably proud of her and of the deference accorded to her by the head-waiters and employees generally. Also, she was infinitely more adorable and seductive than he had expected her to be, her superficial langour cloaking a tempestuosity of passion that challenged his most ardent reciprocity. She made "no bones" about loving him, and he respected her honesty, while taking full advantage of it. In her arms, the world would have been well lost, had that been necessary.

In a sense they were lost—lost in the great metropolitan rendezvous, although conspicuous among the wealthy but timid and self-conscious wives and daughters of nabobs from the biggest little cities of Iowa and the Dakotas. The daily press had not adverted to their marriage, and Simon had not mentioned it at the office.

Clarice decided, as she said, to let it leak out—it saved the trouble of announcements or writing to everybody! Doris Menken would start it,—and that delightful Mr. Pettibone. Wasn't he a dear? Such a joker! Of course, he was not in Simon's class—anybody could see that!—but, for what he was, he was really awfully nice and not so bad-looking. And, anyhow, she couldn't help liking any one who was clearly so devoted to her Simon. Simon admitted that, all things considered, Davis was a pretty good skate. Did he have a lot of money, she inquired? Simon assured her that Davis was a "go-getter" who undoubtedly within five years would be able to buy him out twenty times over.

"I don't believe it!" she asserted stoutly. "I know you're going to make a heap of money, Simon! Of course, you are! Everybody will want you for their lawyer!"

"But I don't want to make a heap of money!" he disavowed. "There's a lot in life besides that!"

"O, I know—that 'good name rather to be chosen than great riches' stuff—but why not both? I'm sure that if you have a good reputation you'll get the riches, too!"

They dined at a new restaurant every night, after which they went to the theatre and then on to the inevitable "club" this and "club" that, where they danced until one or two, taxied back to the hotel, and lay until dawn drowsily talking and kissing one another. Their passion, always rapturous, seemed insatiate and a complete end in itself.

Clarice slept until noon, lunched in bed, and shopped until it was time to meet Simon at the McGowans' and see how the furniture-movers and paper-hangers were getting on. She had a way of cajoling people that often

accomplished the apparently impossible and, long before they moved in, she had Mrs. McGowan completely won over. Ora and Emmeline were inclined to be a little stand-offish at first, due to the fact that Clarice, with the connivance of the landlady, had manœuvred the Pennycuicks out of their lavatorial exclusiveness, to the extent of yielding the use of the bathroom two nights in the week. Mrs. McGowan clearly regarded her as an asset, and she certainly accomplished wonders with a small amount of chintz, a few reprints, and a tin of enamel, with which she had painted the mantel and trim a delicate pea-green. From the Hungerford apartment were disgorged a rug of sorts, a mahogany bureau, a teak tabaret, a Japanese screen, a vast wardrobe, a wicker armchair for which Clarice purchased pink cushions, and a steel engraving of Washington Irving at "Sunnyside" surrounded by his friends. Simon was delighted with the total effect, agreeing whole-heartedly that it was "sweet," in spite of the fact that there no longer seemed to be any proper place for his desk, which—temporarily—had been shoved into the shadows between the sitting and bedrooms. "Of course, you do most of your work at the Public Library, dear," she explained.

They were badly cramped, especially since Clarice had replaced the two small iron bedsteads by an old-fashioned double wooden one with box-springs. It practically filled the room.

"I don't see why, if two people love one another, they should want to sleep in separate beds!" declared Clarice frankly.

"Nor I!" agreed Simon, with equal matter-of-factness. "Anyhow, we'll have room enough in bed, if we haven't got it anywhere else!"

They were crazily happy from the start, and Clarice, in

spite of the fact that she did not get Simon's breakfast in the morning,—which he cooked for himself on the gas-stove—proved herself a most considerate and helpful companion. The hotel bill had seemed enormous to Simon and had contained a large number of charges for extras, including mysterious dry-goods and drug-store purchases, but he paid it, together with the cost of putting the rooms into proper shape, out of his accumulated savings, and started his marital bookkeeping with a clean slate.

He was now—after three years—getting five hundred a month from Robinson, Myer & Burr, which, with Clarice's annual income of one thousand, seemed ample for two people, although it did not seem excessive if they should have a family. Once, while looking over an apartment with Mr. Bibby, Simon had commented upon the fact that it would be hardly large enough should they have a child, but had elicited no response from Clarice. He decided that perhaps she had not heard him,—anyhow, it would be time to look out for that in the spring. For Simon fully expected to have a child immediately. He wanted a family—not merely one,—and, without having discussed the matter with Clarice, assumed that, being a normal woman, she felt the same way that he did about it.

Her devotion touched him. She was always thinking of little things to make him comfortable, asking how he felt and whether he wasn't tired and, when he was disinclined to go out in the evening—even to the neighboring movie-house on 14th Street—she made no complaint. For now that he was married, Simon's anxiety to work upon his book, which had been suppressed during the fever of his courtship, reasserted itself. He had by this time rearranged and rewritten most of his grand-

father's manuscript, and he wanted to get a good start on his new material, before life became complicated by the addition to the family which he so speedily anticipated. But Mrs. Hungerford had actually gone abroad—she had sailed with an excursion party bound for Egypt and the Holy Land, ten days after their wedding,—and it seemed rather hard on Clarice to leave her alone in the evenings, after being down-town all day.

Nevertheless, he found it almost impossible to work at the flat. In the first place, they had so much to talk over that he would hardly get started before it was time to go to bed; in the second, Clarice—poor child!—was always interrupting to inquire if the room was the right temperature, or his chair "fixed right to see by," or whether he minded her rocking, or to make some absent-minded, irrelevant inquiry about a half-forgotten acquaintance—"O, I'm so sorry, darling! I forgot entirely!—I won't do it again!" she would whisper penitently. Lastly, now that his desk was gone, there really wasn't any fit place for him to write. After half-a-dozen vain attempts to concentrate, he was apt to throw down the book in despair and light his pipe.

"I hope I didn't disturb you, dear!"

"O, no!—I just don't seem able to get into it, somehow."

"Is there anything I can do?"

"No, dear!"

"Wouldn't it be better if you went up to the library?"

"O, Clarice!—I wouldn't do that! Leave you here all by yourself?"

"I might go along and read."

"O, it'll be all right here after I get used to it.—How'd you like to go over to the second performance at the Palace?"

"Do you think you ought to?"

"Sure!—I've been working all day. Why shouldn't I? Come along!"

So in the end they usually went.

Clarice seemed so occupied with small affairs that it did not occur to him as strange that with all her professed interest in literature she should do so little reading. The sitting-room was full of books, it was true, but most, if not all of them, were Simon's, and Clarice hardly ever looked at one. But she was an assiduous reader of the daily papers, of *Town and Country, Vogue, Vanity Fair,* and *Town Topics.* The latter was always in evidence and Simon was constantly astounded at Clarice's intimate knowledge of the lives of people she had never met and of whom he had hardly heard.

"I see Ella Brent is going to marry that Italian prince after all!" she might say musingly.—"Prince Cattalini."

"Who's she?"

"O, you must know the Brents! They live up on East 69th Street, over by Park. She came out two winters ago, at the Ambassador—a terribly swell party."

"Did you go?"

"No. I wasn't asked. I don't know her."

or

"Mrs. Unterbloom has got her divorce!"

"What's that?"

"Don't you remember Mrs. Unterbloom—Dora Drew, the dancer? Of course you do, Simon!—She married Reggy Capron, the tennis player, and divorced him last year to marry Oscar Unterbloom, the real-estate man.—Well, she's just divorced *him.*"

"She must be a swell dame!"

"She's the one that left the two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar string of pearls in the toilet of the Pull-

man car—and gave the porter a thousand-dollar-bill for calling it to her attention.—You surely read that!"

or

"I'd like to meet that Mrs. Coverdale! They say she gives the smartest parties! All the theatrical people and movie stars and artists and writers—with the most wonderful music. Where everybody does stunts, you know,—that kind? Doris Menken went once—with a dinner-party she was at. Doris didn't know her, but the hostess took her. She said it was just simply great! Eva LeGallienne was there and Lillian Gish and Gloria Swanson and John McCormack and Ethel Barrymore and Alma Gluck and Charley Towne and everybody you ever heard of! They stayed until six o'clock."

"Where were Dorothy Dix and Beatrice Fairfax?—And Mayor Hylan? And Pola Negri? And Doctor Frank Crane?"

"O, Simon! Don't be mean! How do I know? Maybe they were there.—I wish I'd been!"

"Well, maybe you'll be invited some day!"

"I hope so!"

"What do you want to go to a party like that for, Clarice?"

"To meet all those celebrated people."

"What good'll that do you?"

"Why then I'd know them."

Clarice made a practice of reading aloud, for Simon's information, the social columns in the *Times* and *Herald Tribune* and commenting upon the doings thus chronicled of the elect. She knew the names of all the débutantes, what was being done for them, followed their goings and comings and subsequent histories. She knew the details of every coming-out party, engagement, wedding, birth, death, and divorce; who had gone to Palm Beach and

who to Miami; who was at Hot Springs, White Sulphur, Aiken, and Saratoga; the latest scandal among the Newport and Southampton sets; and what the Prince of Wales was up to. She was a veritable bureau of vital statistics relating to the wealth and relative positions of all those in the social hierarchy; nevertheless, her interest, although consuming, was detached; she had thoroughly mastered the social science while remaining a mere observer, like the expert upon the bleachers who knows, as well as the coach himself, the personal history and characteristics of every player and what he should, and will, do at each move in the game. Such novels as she read were of the "society" variety and she was letter-perfect in social technique—an adept at squelching with sweet unresponsiveness the simpering advances of such as Ora and Emmeline. Yet how she had become so remained a mystery,—a matter of inheritance—the Hungerford blood, Simon decided. She was a connoisseuse in dress and her knowledge of the history of fashion was comprehensive. She was fond of the play, familiar with the names and personalities of most of the celebrities of Broadway, and would occasionally lament the fact that she had never tried to go on the stage, yet her interest in the artificial reflection of life was patently secondary to her interest in life itself.

Their life at Mrs. McGowan's was astonishingly quiet, Clarice explaining that, since they had not made any public announcement of their wedding and expected to move so soon, it was hardly worth while letting her friends know where they were. Besides, the room was too small to do any entertaining in. She had thought of giving a tea, but it would be better to wait—really. She was sincere in her desire to have Simon go on with his book, although it sometimes seemed to him as if she

hardly appreciated the exhaustive character of the undertaking, and she did not hesitate to make it clear that, in her opinion, it would be a mistake to let it interfere in any way with his progress at the office, which continued to be rapid.

He was now Myer's right-hand man, and, as Myer was the "live wire" of Robinson, Myer & Burr, Simon was in the direct line of promotion to a junior partnership. He had been taken out of general trial work, to assist in the preparation of an important suit in the Federal Courts, where one of the firm's richest clients was accused of unrighteously and by "constructive fraud" appropriating an oil-field in Oklahoma.

The men with whom he was thus thrown in contact were shrewd, good-natured, business cut-throats, rough in speech and ruthless even in their dealings with one another, who would instantly have seen through any pretension to a knowledge that he did not possess. In Simon they perceived a young man, whose very difference in ideals might well serve their ends and whose honesty of mind would never lead them astray. Simon scored with them as much for what he admitted frankly that he did not know as for what he no less emphatically asserted that he did. He assumed no superiority of education, answered their questions in their own vernacular, treated their morals cynically, and laid down the law to them, as contained in the decisions. "Colonel Bill" Babson,—the ringleader of the band and president of the "Great Western & Lone Star Oil Company," their titular client,—took a great fancy to Simon. He was a big man like his name—with enormous shoulders—and he carried an ivory-handled six-shooter at his hip and travelled in a private car with two "nieces," sometimes referred to as "wards." "You come out to the sage-brush

with me, son, and I'll make a millionaire of you in no time!" Simon grinned and thanked him.

The "Lone Star" was building its own spur up to the main line of one of the transcontinental railway systems, a reorganization was in progress, and the legal questions involved were turned over to Simon. In this way, almost before he knew it, he found himself enmeshed in railroad law. But, busy as he was in the firm's affairs, he saw no more of his associates in the office, with the possible exception of Mr. Hepper, than he had at the beginning. The employees in the legal department-store of Robinson, Myer & Burr labored independently, and frequently even unaware of each other's existence; and there was a tradition that one of the members of the professional staff, who had worked for a couple of weeks at the same table in the library with a man who he inferred was a colleague, feeling that common courtesy required that he introduce himself, had been met by the discovery that the stranger was no less a personage than Mr. Burr.

Clarice "pumped" Simon as to everything that went on in the office and showed an intense curiosity about every one with whom he was thrown in contact. She was thrilled at his account of "Colonel Bill" Babson, and would "give a lot," she declared, to meet him.

"That rough-neck!" snorted Simon. "He's no man for you to meet! I wouldn't let the fellow in the front-door—unless by mistake!"

"But you work for him, don't you? He's awfully rich. Why wouldn't he be a good client for you to have when you start out for yourself?" insisted Clarice.

"O, well,—he's their client, not mine,—it's different in a big firm like that!" mumbled Simon unconvincingly.

His work now, not infrequently, detained him late at the office or even into the evening, but Clarice showed

herself patient about anything that had to do with his career, and sometimes, when his conscience smote him for his involuntary neglect and he called her up, he found that she had already gone to bed. Doris was about the only girl friend of Clarice's that he ever met at the flat; Davis called occasionally, but he had not seen Otto since that unexpected confrontation on the night of their marriage.

"I see another big party has been given for Vira Bradley!" remarked Clarice one evening. "I should think enough had been done for that girl! It's the fifth this month!"

Simon looked up from his book.

"Vira Bradley?"

"Yes, Judge Furman's niece.—She came out last autumn. She's the one that's supposed to be so beautiful. I must say I don't see it. She's too dark! I've got her picture somewhere. I cut it out of one of the supplements."

"What about her?"

"He's having a big party for her at the Park Lane to-night."

"O, is it to-night?"

"Why, did you know about it?" quickly inquired Clarice.

"I got a card. It was sent to the office. I chucked it away."

"O, Simon!—We might have gone!"

"But it was addressed just to me."

"O, dear!—That wouldn't have made any difference! You could have written a note explaining that you had been married—and they would have invited me, too. That wasn't very thoughtful of you, Simon!"

There were tears of reproach in her eyes.

"Why, Clarice!—Don't take it like that. It didn't strike me as anything. I had no idea you'd care to go—it was just a kid party. We wouldn't have known anybody."

"Not care to go? I'd have just loved to go! We'll never know anybody unless we manage to meet them. There's got to be a beginning. And it wasn't just a kid party, as you call it, either. Everybody was there. The names fill half a column. And ours might have been there, too!—O, dear!"

"Well, I'm sorry!—Of course, if I'd known that you would have enjoyed it I could have asked Judge Furman for an invitation—" he stopped. "Come to think of it, if Furman knew that we were going to be married he could have sent us an invitation himself."

Clarice bent over and examined the stitches of the tapestry in her lap. She did not reply for several seconds.

"But why *should* he have known?"

"Why—you were a client of his office, weren't you?"

Clarice held the tapestry to the light.

"I suppose so," she replied vaguely. "What made you think I was a client of the office?"

"Otto told me so."

Clarice laid down the tapestry.

"What else did he tell you?" she demanded. Her voice was metallic.

Simon placed his book upon the table.

"He told me nothing that I didn't know already nothing that you hadn't told me yourself!" he said, gazing across at her with surprise.

It was the first time that they had adverted to Clarice's past, since their marriage.

"He's a dirty beast!" she cried, and her eyes were as metallic as her voice. It was a new experience for Simon.

"You mustn't talk that way, Clarice! Otto's all right!" he protested uneasily.

"He hadn't a right to tell you anything!" she declared in fury. "What one tells a lawyer is supposed to be confidential. He ought to be disbarred—or whatever it is! How do I know he hasn't gone blabbing it all over town! —Ugh! I'd just like to get my hands on him!" She curved her fingers into claws.

Simon imprisoned her hands.

"Clarice! Darling! Don't talk that way! Otto didn't tell me anything you told him. In fact, I don't think he mentioned ever having talked to you. What he repeated to me he had evidently heard outside his office.—I didn't know you ever had spoken to him about your affairs."

Clarice grew calmer.

"That's a little different! But, anyhow, I don't think it was very nice of him to mention me at all! I shouldn't have thought you would have let him, Simon!" Her hands twitched again.

"He meant it for the best!"

"I hope you told him that it was none of his business!"

"I did—substantially."

Clarice released herself.

"That explains why Mr. and Mrs. Simon Kent didn't get an invitation from Judge Furman," she affirmed. "But—it doesn't explain why *you* did!"

Simon considered the matter. Certainly after the way Otto had spoken it was unlikely that his employer would have included Clarice Hungerford, even as Mrs. Simon Kent, among his guests at an exclusive entertainment. Who then had sent the invitation?

"Vira must have sent it!" he said. "She probably doesn't know that I'm married."

"'Vira'!—Do you know her?"

"Sure!—I tutored her brother up at Northeast Harbor every summer for three years. She was only a kid—fourteen or fifteen—something like that."

"O!—Re-ally!" exclaimed Clarice. "You must know her very well indeed! How long since you have seen her?"

"Not since the autumn before the war—nineteen-sixteen. That's six years, isn't it?"

"What was she like?—Was she pretty?"

"Not especially. But awfully nice."

"Did you see her much?"

"Every day."

"Haven't you been invited to any of her other parties?"

"No. I don't know how I came to be asked to this one. I didn't know she and her mother were back in New York. They went to Italy a year or so ago."

"Are they rich?"

Simon laughed. What use trying to work!

"How on earth do I know? They were rich enough to pay me a hundred a month!"

For half an hour Clarice, now restored to entire good humor, cross-examined him minutely upon the personal peculiarities, domestic economy, and probable financial resources of the Bradley family.

"They're what I call the real swells—related to all the old families like the Jays and the Livingstons. Gladys knows them well. She's often spoken of them. They go to Grace Church.—Don't you think it might be a good thing if we started going there? It's just around the corner."

"I like to get slept out on Sunday mornings," said Simon. "Besides, I'm an agnostic. They wouldn't let me in."

"You wouldn't have to tell them," she replied in perfect seriousness. "But, of course, if you don't want to —! I might go once in a while by myself—a Bible Class or something. And why don't we leave cards on the Bradleys? They're such old friends of yours. Their sending you that card shows that they want to keep up with you. If you don't feel like calling we could mail them. You ought to do something, you know! That reminds me! There's one thing we ought to do right off—have our names put in the 'Social Register.' "

Simon knew nothing of the "New York Social Register." He supposed that in a general sort of way it was a condensed form of the telephone directory and he saw no reason why, if Clarice so wished, she should not have their names and address in it.

"We'll have to be in the 'Dilatory Domiciles' this year,—but that is of no importance, as we shall move so soon, and next year we can put in our permanent address. I think Kent is an awfully smart name, although I don't care so much for the Simon. Won't it look nice?—'Mr. and Mrs. Simon Kent,' and then a black star to show you were in the war.—'H '14,' which means you are a member of the Harvard Club and graduated with the class of nineteen-fourteen—and then any other clubs you belong to. Some have so many they fill up several lines.—How many others do you belong to, Simon dear?"

"Not a club!"

"Well—and then our address, 'University Place,' and our telephone number." She meditated. "I wonder how it would look if we left out the address and just put in the telephone?—Queer, I guess!"

"Why should you leave out the address?"

"Because we're only going to be here a comparatively short time and 'Stuyvesant 0031' looks so much better than 'University Place'—sort of old family-ish."

"Rats!"

"Simon!"

"Do you know, Clarice, I'm almost beginning to think you're a bit of a snob!"

Clarice did not appear to resent the impeachment.

"Well—I suppose perhaps I am," she conceded. "I can't help it. I do like to go with nice people."

Simon involuntarily thought of Doris.

"Is Doris Menken in the 'Social Register'?"

"She's not a New Yorker—she comes from Greenwich, Connecticut. The Bradleys are the kind of people I mean. Not showy, but swell in a quiet way, and who run things as a matter of course. Take Vira, for instance. You say she's been abroad for several years and yet when she comes back she goes right into the Junior League!"

"What's that?"

"It's the club that all the débutantes belong to—who can get into it. It's quite exclusive. Of course it pretends to be a charitable organization, but a girl joins it really to get herself on the map. It places you. Vira is one of the most—if not the most—prominent girls of the year."

"Funny! I never should have thought of Vira as that kind!"

"Vira! Not prominent!" Clarice gave a dry laugh. "Why that girl was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Just look at the parties that have been given for her!—You don't understand, Simon. She's prominent because she's born so. She can't help it. People want her for what she stands for—wealth, position, background, all that sort of thing. You see Mrs. Bradley's name as patroness for absolutely everything—Metropolitan Dances—Junior Assemblies—Charity Ball—everything."

Clarice was in her element.

"A girl like Vira doesn't have to move her finger to get a thing. She has everything she wants from the start and she goes on having it as long as she lives. She belongs to the real aristocracy as much as if she had a title. She's *it!* She *stays* it! She'll probably get married before the end of her first season to a duke or Standard Oil or something, but if she doesn't, she'll go right on having a perfectly grand time—going to all the big parties and Palm Beach and Paris and on smart scientific expeditions, maybe, like Will Beebe's to the Galapagos Islands—I knew a girl once that went with him and she had just the swellest time! That's where a girl like Vira has such a cinch! Her fun never stops. She goes right on!"

Clarice paused to light a cigarette.

"Go on—this aspect of the feminist movement interests me strangely!" admonished Simon.

"What I mean is—well, take most of these girls who go in for interior decorating or millinery or antiques or beauty shops—do they do it for money? Not a bit! They do it because they find they're being shelved and not getting enough social attention. They're bored because they haven't anything to do and yet they want an excuse for being in evidence. I honestly don't think it's a right thing for them to do. In the first place, I don't believe God intended women to work. He meant them to stay at home and make themselves as attractive as possible to their husbands. A woman who goes down-town and takes a job loses all her charm. And she oughtn't to take the bread out of the mouths of other girls who need it. I feel very strongly about that.—Another thing, their being around with men that way is bound to be demoralizing. Look at the way the men down-town carry on with their stenographers!"

"Do they? I hadn't noticed it."

"Well, you know what I mean!"

"I know you make yourself very attractive to me, my darling! And I'm glad you don't have to work for anybody else for your living."

"I'm sure you find me much more attractive than if I did!" she assured him. "Heavens! It's nearly half past eleven!—I wonder if Ora Spong is reading in the bathroom. I found a copy of 'The Sheik' in there yesterday."

During the first week or two they made a regular practice of dining around the corner at the Wilmerding—five-course table d'hôte $1.25—but the general dreariness of it soon palled upon them and Clarice felt certain that the stale fish would give her ptomaine poisoning. Simon admitted that the oysters did have a rather queer look about them and that the jackets of the negro waiters were far from clean. It was but a step across to the Lafayette or around to the Brevoort on Fifth Avenue, where, besides delicious cooking and excellent service, one had jazz, gaiety, bright lights, and a *je ne sais quoi* air of smartness or Bohemianism that made eating a delightful form of amusement, instead of a chore. If you chose carefully, as Clarice pointed out, you could get quite a lot to eat for two dollars and a half—which was only what their dinner at the Wilmerding cost them. Not the least of Simon's satisfactions, when dining at a first-class restaurant, lay in the notice inevitably accorded to Clarice, who, in the new clothes which she had bought for her trousseau, was always the most *chic* as well as the most beautiful woman in the room. He knew without looking that every head turned in her direction as she entered the door; was conscious that every tongue was asking who she was. And his chest swelled with pride as

she followed so gracefully after the beckoning finger of the smiling maître d'hôtel, down the aisle between the tables, to the places reserved for them by telephone.

Soon they never thought of going to the Wilmerding, and when they wearied of the Lafayette and Brevoort, they would take a taxi up-town and go to one of the new little Russian restaurants, where they discussed the bortsch, the caviare, and urkurt, with a cosmopolitan air and usually ended by buying tickets to the theatre, when Simon would experience a resurgence of pride in Clarice's smouldering loveliness.

§ 2

Among the various social advantages of association with the firm of Robinson, Myer & Burr was that of being invited to the annual banquet tendered by Mr. Robinson to the members of his professional staff. It was, according to Mr. Robinson, a "get-together" occasion, designed to promote loyalty, good fellowship, and kindly feeling among those whose lot the Creator, in His wisdom, had cast together, and who otherwise might not have known of each other's existence. To it were bidden not only the ten full-fledged partners, whose names appeared upon the top of the letter-head and who got a percentage of the profits, with their wives, but also the sixteen other salaried partners whose names appeared below the line. Thither came also the chief realty expert and his wife, the head accountant and his wife, three of the more important private secretaries and their wives, Mr. Hepper and his wife, the librarian, and the twenty law students or clerks, together with such wives as they had.

For convenience the affair was usually held in a private

dining-room at one of the large Broadway hotels, and it was extremely elegant and expensive. It was a matter of pride to Mr. Robinson that he should thus offer hospitality to his associates, and the invitations were personally issued in his name, on engraved note-paper, the whole cost being charged up to the Entertainment Fund. Simon had eaten solemnly through several of these functions, at each of which he had sneaked off as soon as Mr. Robinson had finished his remarks.

"If I were you I'd invent some way to get out of it," he warned Clarice. "With me, it's different,—I've got to go."

"Not go?—Of course I'm going! I want to meet Mr. Robinson and Mr. Myer and all those other famous men. It may help you. Besides, I want the fun of going. I wouldn't miss it for worlds!"

On the night of the feast she emerged from the bedroom in a new glittering gown of appliqué silver, cut so low that he gasped.

"My God, Clarice! You can't wear that!"

"Don't you like my new dress?—Bendel's."

"You look perfectly stunning,—that's the trouble! You're dressed as if you were going to the Vanderbilts'. It's not that kind of a party. There'll be nobody else——"

"That doesn't matter. You want me to look my best, don't you? If you prefer me to look like a stenographer I'll go put on my old gray suit!"

He tried to be jocular.

"No use knocking old Robinson's eye out!"

"Why not knock his eye out? What's the use of being pretty, as you are always saying I am, if nobody knows it? I could be quite an asset to you, Simon."

"You're an asset all right! Of course I'm proud of you

and I adore seeing you well dressed. I didn't want you to be uncomfortable, that's all!"

"Trust me!—I shan't be uncomfortable!"

But even with the knowledge that Clarice was wholly at her ease, Simon's heart sank as she swept forward from the dressing-room, like a duchess at a royal levee, to where he was bunglingly trying to insert the gardenia, offered him by an attendant, in the buttonhole of his dress coat.

"Butter fingers! Let Georgie do it.—There!"

He marvelled at her perfect aplomb.

"This way, please, Miss!"

A waiter held back a portière and they entered the room where Mr. Robinson was receiving and which was almost as crowded as a convention hall. A long row of anxious-looking women, in more or less evening dress, were standing stiffly along the wall, trying to make conversation, while their escorts hovered about a cocktail-table. Most of the older partners and their wives were talking together in a corner. Simon was conscious of a lull in the buzz about them as he presented Clarice to his chief.

Mr. Robinson had on white gloves.

"Ah, Kent!—And, Mrs. Kent! I am certainly glad to know you!" Mr. Robinson beamed upon her benevolently, giving Clarice's hand a fatherly pat.

"I have heard such wonderful things about you from my husband," beamed Clarice, throwing on all her lights —"full head and rear" as Simon was wont to say.

"Well, now! That's very kind of him! I try to help the young men all I can.—However, your husband seems to be able to look out pretty well for himself!" he added significantly, letting go of Clarice's hand with reluctance as another "asset" simpered forward.

"Give me ten exclusive minutes with papa and you'll be a member of the firm!" whispered Clarice. "Who's that smart-looking girl over there in the black lace dress? She's the only one here that doesn't look as if she had come out of a rummage sale!"

"I don't know. She's with a fellow named Munson."

"Do you mean Jack Munson? The family that have the big place at Ardsley? Then she must be Gladys Fairchild. I recognize her now from her picture in the supplements."

"Who the hell is Gladys Fairchild?"

"Why Simon! Her father is in Standard Oil."

"Well, he can stay there!"

"I want you to introduce me to her, right off. Now is the chance."

"But I don't know her!"

"You know her husband, don't you?"

"Hardly spoken to him. Just seen him around.—What do you want, anyhow?"

"I want to meet Gladys Munson. Bring over her husband and present him to me, and then he'll introduce his wife."

Simon hesitated.

"Look here," he stalled— "I hardly know him. In fact, I'm not sure I ever really did meet him. He puts on too much side for me, anyhow. If I go over and speak to him he'll think we're trying to horn in on them."

"What if he does?—Once we know them, they'll forget all that. You're too easy, Simon! You've got to make more effort.—Go ahead now, like a good boy, or it will be too late!"

But Simon did not budge.

"Well, then!—I'll do it myself."

Almost before he realized that she had deserted him

he saw Clarice cross directly to Mrs. Munson and speak to her. Next instant she beckoned him to join them.

"Come over here!—Mrs. Munson, I want you to meet my husband!—You two men are old friends, of course!"

Munson nodded.

"Yes, we've met," he admitted with what seemed to Simon unnecessary caution.

Mrs. Munson, a pale brunette with a languid, provocative eye, gave Simon a casual hand.

"Your wife has saved our lives!—Jack and I were getting lonely among the freaks!"

The two girls seemed already on intimate terms, nudging each other as each new couple arrived, and criticising the looks of the men and the clothes of the women. He was mildly shocked to hear Clarice chatting familiarly of Southampton and Westbury, referring to "Larry" Devereaux, "Dick" Darcy, the Longwoods, the Maitlands, and the McKays, as if they were old friends, and dragging in "my cousins, the Hungerfords," every few moments, mentioning each by name. From behind the closed doors of the adjoining apartment arose the sound of the harp, flute, and dulcimer. Mr. Robinson clapped his hands.

"The gentlemen will please find their partners!"

Simon had drawn Mrs. Hepper and most of the guests had taken their seats before his frantic searching disclosed his allotted lady standing prim, tall, and alone, like a disapproving female heron, in the rear of the antechamber. He could have sworn that she was standing on one leg. Her general resemblance to Ora Spong—for a moment he was almost convinced that it *was* Ora—was heightened by the fact that she sniffed. The saxophones were braying a popular march as he shoved her into her seat near the lower end of the smilax-covered horseshoe, and squeezed in beside her. His depression

was not relieved by the discovery that his companion upon the left was Mrs. Adolph Magnus, a gigantic Swedish blonde, who, according to common report, had once served in the capacity of cook to her present spouse. Directly across the table he could see Mr. Hepper's red nose, sandwiched between the heavily Hebraic features of Mrs. Morris, the wife of the realty expert, and those of Mrs. Fergus McCallum, the wife of the chief accountant. He could not see Clarice anywhere. He hoped that she wouldn't get too "raw a deal." And then, to his amazement, just as the waiters had removed the soup, he saw her—sitting like a queen on the dais at the left of the host, who was paying her marked attention.

She caught his eye, smiled affectionately, and waved. At that end of the banquet table the company presented a distinguished appearance. Simon was struck by the intellectual quality of the men's faces and the elegance of the women's dresses, among which Clarice's was conspicuous. Lower down—"below the salt"—where he sat, the average fell off appreciably. Then Mrs. Magnus claimed his notice.

"Do you lak de movies, mister? Ay go reg'lar," she apprised him, in a voice that appeared to come from the bowels of the earth, or of Mrs. Magnus. "Ay saw von dis arternoon. Ay laffed till ay mos' split. It vas all 'bout a fella vot bought a pianner an' his vife didn't vant it in de house, so he tried to sneak it home at night, and she t'ot he vas burglar and she give him a swat an' grabbed him, and dey fell down tree flights of stairs wit de pianner on top of dem and it squ-vasched her. Ay t'ot ay'd yoost die—it was so fon-ey."

Simon assured her that he thought the "movies" were simply great—to say nothing of their marvellous educational influence. He expatiated on this for some time.

"An' ay forgot—dere vas a dog in it, too!" she inter-

rupted. "De man vas afraid he'd lose him, so he put him in de pianner and ven his vife give him de swat, de dog yoomped out and bit her in de leg.—It vas awful fon-ey!" Simon joined in her reminiscent laughter. The advent of the fish created a diversion in her favor.

"Ay bane goin' to eat!" she announced. "Don't mind me, mister. Ay vant to see how dey can cook fish here."

Waiters appeared bearing champagne—"Cordon Rouge." There seemed to be no dearth of it. Mrs. Hepper, who had not spoken up to that time, sniffed and turned her glass ostentatiously upside down.

"I think some of us here ought to set an example," she stated, in a shrill effort to attract the attention of the other side of the table, then relapsed into silence, with her eye fixed upon her husband.

The younger men made heroic efforts to appear gay and festive, but the older and more experienced had already resigned themselves to monosyllabic gloom.

Simon, laboring fruitlessly to draw a smile from Mrs. Hepper, decided that she had had something done to her face—"lifted" maybe. He told her law stories, he commented upon the news of Greater New York, he inquired solicitously about each of the five virgins, her offspring, and he enormously admired Mr. Hepper. To no purpose. Her thoughts were clearly elsewhere. She vouchsafed no response except a seemingly irrelevant and almost inaudible: "He promised me not to!" Apart from the fact that she consumed an extraordinary amount of food for one so thin, she might have been an East Indian in a cataleptic trance.

With the second round of champagne the hilarity somewhat increased. Mr. Burr, for the benefit of his nearer neighbors, gave a lifelike imitation of a negro ex-

horter, and Mrs. Munson dared to smoke a cigarette, which she removed with rather ostentatious defiance from an enamelled case in her vanity bag. She even had the audacity to request a light from Mr. Myer, who flirtatiously held a match for her. A general loosening up followed, and when the leader of the negro orchestra did a cakewalk around the table,—snapping his fingers and shouting something to the effect that Mary had a little lamb and also had a bear and though he'd seen her little lamb he'd never seen her bear—the first doubtful moment of hesitation, during which everybody looked to see if Mr. Robinson was smiling, was followed by protracted applause. Then there was another song about a farmer, and more champagne, and Mr. Robinson stood up and smiled again, while the band played a few bars of "O, he's a jolly good fellow" and, thus encouraged, they all arose and loudly asserted in self-conscious disharmony that *he* was a jolly good *fel*low, O *he* was a jolly go—od *fel*-low, that *he* was a jolly good *fe-el*-low, which *no*body could *deny*. After which Mr. Hepper said "Wow!" most unexpectedly, and—to the embarrassment of the majority of those present, who thought that the song was over and had sat down again,—Mr. McCallum started singing in a basso profundo heavily encrusted with Scotch burr:

"So say we a-all of us!
So say we a-all of us!
So say we a-all!
So say we a-all of us!
So say we a-all of us!
So—say—hay—hay we a-a-all of us!
So-ho-ho sa-ay we-e a-a-ll!"

It was a solo at first, but, after a line or so, everybody managed to join in again—the air being familiar and

the sentiment obvious—and by the last flourish the chorus was tremendous.

"Wow!" said Mr. Hepper again, and this time they felt sure it was all right to sit down.

"My friends," began Mr. Robinson, "I do not rise to make a speech but merely to bid you all a hearty welcome. It is my happy privilege, one which now, I am glad to say, has become an annual custom, to gather you about me here where, without restraint and formality, we may meet on equal terms, see deep into one another's hearts and show our loyalty to the firm—the dear old firm of which I have been the head for so many years!" His voice quavered.

"And, because I know that you do love the old firm and all it stands for, I have asked Mrs. Gillett, the wife of our old friend Mr. Percy Gillett, the very able head of our divorce bureau, who is also a celebrated vocal artist, having sung in most of the big cities of Europe,—I refer to *Mrs.* Gillett, naturally,—I have, I say, asked Mrs. Gillett to favor us by singing a little song, the words of which I wrote myself during a few of my only too rare moments of leisure. It is in the same metre and sung to the same tune as that beautiful waltz song rendered by Miss Fritzi Scheff in her dainty operetta, 'Mademoiselle Modiste,' which begins, as you all remember, 'Sweet summer breeze, whispering trees.' You will find it printed on a card beside your plates, and I hope that you will all join in the chorus, just as you have been doing.—Mrs. Gillett?"

Mr. Robinson sank back into his place as Mrs. Gillett exuberantly arose.

Mrs. Gillett, her robust figure swathed in crimson satin, acknowledged in a professionally gracious manner the applause which greeted her, bowed to the orchestra

leader, and in a deep, throaty voice, charged with pathos, began to sing:

"Why are we here, friends all so dear,
Of Robinson, Myer and Burr?"

she inquired wistfully. Then answered:

"Simply because, every one does
Love Robinson, My-er, and Burr!"

She articulated the oft-recurring name of the firm with such lingering tenderness that Simon feared that she might give way to tears.

"Chorus!" called out Mr. Robinson, beating time with an ice-cream-fork.

Bashfully the loving friends caught up the refrain:

"Why are we he-re, friends all so de-ar,
Of Rob-in-son, My-er and Burr?"

they asked.

Mrs. Magnus was soughing like a Cave of the Winds. Simon liked her for the simple, healthy polyp that she was. Mrs. Hepper hummed—a combination of Emmeline and Ora. He wondered what they would have thought of it all—been sarcastic probably!

There were eight verses to the song. Mrs. Gillett sang all of them and after each one Mr. Robinson shouted: "Chorus! Robinson, Myer & Burr!" Then he called on his old friend and partner for a few remarks—Mr. Myer! Mr. Myer's chair, however, proved to be empty; it was said that he had been summoned to the telephone, so Mr. Robinson's eye flickered around the table and settled upon Mr. Burr.

Mr. Burr looked so facetious that most of the ladies began to titter even before he opened his mouth, and as

he proceeded, his grimaces were so excruciating that his audience several times laughed loudly at the wrong place and disconcerted Mr. Burr to the extent of causing him to slip unconsciously from the mellow accents of Tennessee into an Irish brogue. Nevertheless, he made a tremendous "hit," and even Mrs. Magnus, who had sat throughout with expressionless Scandinavian stolidity, admitted that he was "fon-ey."

Simon, listening to the speaker's stale witticisms and mildewed anecdotes, was just thinking that "phony" would be more apt, when Mr. Burr, at the moment his audience was yawping loudest, suddenly paused, assumed an expression of deep melancholy, and in a voice several octaves below that which he had hitherto been using and without a trace of accent of any sort, except possibly that of the Fifth Ward, told them that while he, like the rest of them, enjoyed a hearty laugh, he never could attend one of these celebrations and look into the earnest young faces about the table without a solemn consciousness of the great debt they all, including himself, owed to the man who had created the firm of Robinson, Myer & Burr, whose ideals and example were a daily inspiration, a man whose only interest was that of his associates, a man who never thought of himself, a man who now for fifteen years had been a—they would pardon his little joke?—a father-in-law to him—(nervous laughter) and who was a father-in-law to every young man who came into his office, a man—his eyes filled and his mouth curved—a man of whom he never thought without wanting to take off his hat—his dear old—their dear old—friend and benefactor, John Henry Robinson.

He sat down and studied the finger-bowl in front of him. Mr. Robinson blew his nose. Everybody felt that it was a very solemn moment, too solemn even for hand-

clapping. The hush that followed was a tribute to Mr. Burr's eloquence and to Mr. Robinson's purity of soul. Mrs. Hepper's sniff relieved the tension and a murmur of appreciation was followed by a round of decorous applause. Mr. Robinson blew his nose again, wiped it courageously, and in a husky voice said that he would now ask one of the younger men to say a few words—Mr. Tiddy, the head of the patent-law department.

Mr. Tiddy, who was a rakish infant of thirty-nine, with a button nose and a swathe of black hair plastered archly over his polished bald spot, had prepared a funny speech beginning with a perfect "wow" he had heard at Proctor's last week, and the atmosphere of gravity, generated by the sweetly solemn thoughts of Mr. Burr, made him feel absolutely sick. It was clear that they expected of him something in the nature of a prayer or at least as sober as an obituary. Anything else would seem positively sacrilegious. He could never tell that story about the Scotchman and the elephant! If he did, Old Robinson would sack him.

He arose glassy-eyed and feeling as if a rooster was beating its wings against the inside of his stomach. He had carefully learned his speech and all he could think of to say was: "The remarks of the last speaker made me think of a little story I once heard about an elephant. It seems that a Scotchman—" Now it was horribly clear to Mr. Tiddy that nothing said by Mr. Burr could possibly have suggested an elephant—or a Scotchman. They were all looking at him and waiting. Gloating! O, for a trap-door, an open window,—sudden death in any form! He tried to speak—to make some sort of a noise anyhow, but it was no use. The silence was as utterly utter as in the vacuum between the worlds. It was blasphemously cracked.

"Hic!—Wow!" suddenly exploded Mr. Hepper, and upset a glass.

"Leander!" ejaculated Mrs. Hepper.

It was the password to paradise for Mr. Tiddy.

"Speaking of 'wows,'" said Mr. Tiddy brightly—in whose behalf the gods had thus intervened to restore normalcy—"I heard a pretty good one the other day about an elephant. It seems that there was a Scotchman——"

It was a really funny story and just vulgar enough to make everybody feel at ease again. The gelatinous Mrs. Mangus heaved with laughter, while two tears slid slowly down over her apple cheeks.

"O, boy!" she panted. "Dat's a fon-ey fella." Mr. Robinson laughed, Mr. Burr laughed, everybody laughed —except Mrs. Hepper.

"I'm going to take that man home!" she informed Simon.

"O, he's all right!" he replied. "Leave him alone.—You might hurt his feelings.—He's helping things along."

"I'll help *him* along!" declared the lady heron vindictively. But the waiters had just brought in the cognac, the crême de menthe, and the kimmel; and Mr. Hepper, who had captured a bottle of whiskey, repudiated with scorn the suggestion that it was a long way to Flushing. "Car ever' f'teen min'ts!" he asserted, and began to carol softly, "'S long, long way to Flushing, into the land of my dreamsh!"

Followed an interlude, during which the orchestra played "Papa Love Mamma" and some of those more at ease got up and "circulated," the adjacent ladies bridging the void thus left between them and discussing the relative merits of Montclair, White Plains, and Jamaica. Several seized the opportunity for a word or two with Mr.

Robinson, and Mr. Myer and Mr. Burr both came over and asked to meet Clarice. Simon remained in his place. Mrs. Magnus had gone somewhere, and Mrs. Hepper, oblivious of social advantages, was glaring at Leander, who had slumped down, with his neck resting on the back of his gilt chair.

Young gentlemen who, in hired dress suits, had congealed between strange women throughout the evening, revived, borrowed cigarettes, and, spying friends from the same department in other parts of the room, sought them out with: "Say, Sweetzer! Wha'd yuh think of that opinion in the Potts case?" or "D'yuh see where the jury acquitted Simonelli? I'd almost like to strangle my mother-in-law myself, if that's all they do to you!" "I say, old horse, I see in the *Law Journal* how Fishbaum vs. Fishbaum has been overruled.—What do you think of Rosenberg, J.? They say that secretary of his writes all his opinions!"—"A judge has a pretty fat job anyway—seventeen and a half thou' a year!"—"D'yer see what the Supreme Court did to the Unions?—Have you read 'Saddlecloth on Injunctions Pendente Lite'?"

Social cleavages were rigidly maintained. Robinson, Myer & Burr's loving friends in the Income Tax Department clung to the others of their kind. The Divorce Department, the Personal Injuries Department, the Probate Department, each had its own little party.

Gradually the ladies were left alone. Some followed the example of their husbands and gravitated toward others affiliated with the same department. But for the most part they stayed stiffly in their seats, isolated pins stuck upright at intervals along the chart of the gastronomic battle-front. It was a hopeless and foredoomed undertaking for any legal Good Samaritan, however well-intentioned, to saunter over to one of these

erectly forbidding females and attempt to cajole her into conversation.

"I see your husband's in the Personal Injuries Department!" did not seem a particularly ingratiating form of approach, and, if attempted, the ladies usually acted as if somebody were trying to pick them up.

At the end of a half-hour Mr. Robinson rapped on the table once more and, while the band played "The Good Old Summer Time," the visiting diners hastily reassembled in their places for the last lap. Mr. Robinson, who by this time had become quite pink, made another touching little speech in which he stressed the point that his own personal honor and the honor of the firm were at every moment of the day and night in the individual hands of each of those present. "Loyalty" must be their watchword, loyalty to Robinson, Myer & Burr, loyalty to the law, and loyalty to Mr. Robinson *in personam*. "All for one, one for all!" He regretted that amid such a galaxy of forensic talent he could not call upon everybody for a speech, but the hour waxed late and, to quote the words of the greatest of all poets, the glow-worm showed the matin to be near. They must soon be scattering to their respective beds. The occasion had been—for him at least—most enjoyable and stimulating. He hoped that next year would see them all assembled again in the same way. Meantime, he wanted each of them to think of him as a friend, for he had a warm place in his old heart for them all. He was more than happy to adopt Mr. Burr's felicitous phrase of "father-in-law." Yes, he truly felt toward them all as if they were his sons-in-law. He wanted them to be at perfect liberty to come to him at any time and talk things over. He wished them to feel that they were soldiers in a common cause—the immortal cause of Justice. And now, before

they sang a few of the dear old familiar songs, if there was anybody who had anything upon his heart, anybody who felt that he had any grievance, anybody who desired to make any comment or criticism about his work or suggestion as to the conduct of the office, would he not please get up and make it then and there like a man—otherwise Mr. Robinson would feel justified in assuming——

He looked around the table and there was a hush—that hush in which one must speak or forever after hold his peace. It was during said hush that Mr. Hepper unexpectedly and solemnly arose and, leaning slightly forward with his stomach against the now dishevelled horseshoe, gazed fixedly at Mr. Robinson. A surplice of smilax was draped about his shoulders and a carnation protruded from above each ear.

"Mr.—uh—Hepper," said Mr. Robinson suspiciously, "Mr. Hepper—uh—do you wish—uh—to say anything?"

They were all looking at Mr. Hepper, who undoubtedly did wish to say something.

"I do!" said he with the oracular and authoritative confidence of one gloriously drunk.

"Well, what is it?" snapped Mr. Robinson. "Be brief!"

Mr. Hepper drew in the corners of his mouth.

Pointing an accusing finger at his distinguished employer, he answered:

"'s all—hc—bunk! You shay you wan' jushish!—I shay you wan' monish! Monish not jushish!—hc—Follow me?"

Kind hands dragged Mr. Hepper down. He disappeared so quickly that the majority of loving friends present were not even aware of his blasphemy, supposing merely that he more or less disagreed with Mr. Robinson

about something. Muffled in a napkin he was gently but irresistibly conducted by Simon and Mr. McCallum to the coat-room, while at a signal from Mr. Robinson the orchestra burst into "Waltz me around again, Willie, around and around and around!"

Simon left him smothered behind an arras of overcoats, sitting regally with an umbrella in his right hand and somebody's else derby upon the back of his head, impressively informing Mrs. Hepper that it was—hc—"the bunk" and "a long, long way to Flushing." By the time Simon had regained his seat beside Mrs. Magnus the tune had changed to "I'm a-workin' on the rail-road!" which by a common inspiration was extemporaneously altered to:

"I'm a-workin' in the la-aw—firm
Of Rob-inson, My-er a-and Burr!
I'm a-workin' in the law firm——"

"To see what I can learn!" interpolated Mr. Robinson at the top of his lungs——

"To se-e wha-at I ca-an le-arn!" they reiterated submissively.

"Don't you hear the people shou-ting
'Robinson, Myer a-nd Burr?'"

The remainder of the song became slightly confused between the injunctions to Dinah to blow her horn and the attempt to synchronize and make it rhyme with Burr, but in the momentum of success, and with Miss Gillett for a coryphæus, they automatically swung into:

"Sweet Summer Breeze
Whispering trees!
*Rob*inson, *My*er and *Burr!*
Roses in bloom, wafted perfume,
*Rob*inson, *My*er and *Burr!*"

It was astonishingly easy, Simon found. There was hardly any popular song which, with a slight syncopation, could not be made to support the refrain so dear to their hearts:

"Sweet Rosie O'Grady,
Robinson, Myer and Burr!"

East Side, West Side,
Robinson, Myer and Burr!"

It became a bit bumpy as they rattled through the last song but one—"Good-night ladies!"

"Good-night ladies!
Good-night ladies!
Good-night lay-dies!
Rob'n's'n, M'r 'n' Burr!"

Then the band struck up "Auld Lang Syne" and Mr. Myer and Mr. Burr, approaching simultaneously from opposite sides, each placed a hand upon one of the shoulders of their dear old chief. Mr. Robinson promptly responded by encircling his partners, and everybody began to look about bashfully and wonder whether it was quite nice for a gentleman to put his hand on a lady's bare arm. Then had begun valiantly, "Should *a-uld* acquaint-*ance be* forgot—" but most of them did not know the second line and, to cover their embarrassment, sang "er-er-er" while making coy passes at each other. Clarice saved the situation by boldly grabbing Mr. Burr's left hand and, once the precedent had been set by proper authority, the rest without dissent joined unanimously in the circle. Mrs. Magnus not only rested her arm, estimated by Simon as weighing approximately twenty-three pounds, upon his shoulder, but leaned her entire fifteen stone heavily upon him as well.

"We'll take a cup o' kindness yet
For o-old lang syne!"

It trailed off lachrymosely and Simon feared for a moment that Mrs. Magnus might attempt to kiss him. He broke away, leaving her standing like a chicken with one wing elevated in the air, while he and Clarice joined the crowd shaking hands with Mr. Robinson.

"Now don't forget," their host reminded her, "that you and your husband are dining with me next Thursday!"

Outside the ladies' room they collided with the Munsons who, it seemed, lived on Tenth Street, and when Clarice wondered vaguely if they could get a taxi at that hour, were invited to ride down-town.

Once in the Munson's trig car the girls fell shrieking upon each other's shoulders.

"*O*, what a party!—a perfect scream!" from Gladys Munson.

"I didn't know such people existed!" declared Clarice.

She told the Munsons to drop them at Fifth Avenue and 10th Street,—that where they were living for the moment—"camping" she called it—was just a step around the corner and they would walk the rest of the way, but Mrs. Munson would not hear of it and ordered the chauffeur to drive to Mrs. McGowan's.

"What a nice old house!" she exclaimed as they drew up in front of it. "So much character!"

"It used to be the court end of town, of course!" Simon recognized his own words of an earlier day. "We take our meals across, at the Lafayette."

"How delightful!—But isn't it rather expensive?"

"Not particularly!" Clarice somehow managed to convey the impression that with the Kents money was no object. "We expect to move up-town in a few weeks."

They shook hands all round and amid urgent reciprocal invitations to call or "have a little party or something" bade each other good-night.

"Simon!" said Clarice as she snapped off the light, half an hour later, "I do wish you'd get a new dress suit. —Did you notice how carefully George Munson was dressed?"

CHAPTER VII

§ 1

Mr. Robinson's banquet was for Simon a milestone, both in his professional and his marital careers, which thereafter were closely interwoven. From it also dated Clarice's intimacy with Gladys Munson and the beginning of a certain restlessness which made their domestic evenings at Mrs. McGowan's—so far as any real work on Simon's part was concerned—wholly abortive. Mr. Robinson had made good on his invitation—nobly and generously good—and they had dined with him and his old-maid sister at his apartment—an intimate little *partie carrée*—and gone to a very racy French farce in which there figured an apocryphal "nunkie" who bore a rather shocking resemblance to Mr. Robinson. Clarice had had the audacity to call attention to this and on the strength of it had humorously declared her intention to call him "Uncle Henry," an avuncular relationship which their host was only too delighted to adopt, and which he carried out with thorough gallantry.

"We've got him all right!" announced Clarice when they reached home. "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if he gave you a raise. I dropped a few little hints about the high cost of living and I think he caught on."

"I'm sorry you did that, Clarice! I'd hate to have Robinson think you were trying to work him for anything."

"He invited *us* to dinner—we didn't ask *him!*" she retorted.

"Well, anyhow—" Simon did not finish his remark.

Three days later Mr. Robinson sent for him.

"How are you, Simon?" It was the first time that his chief had thus distinguished him. "Sit down. Will you smoke?—I have been greatly pleased with the work you have been doing lately. Mr. Myer says you are handling the preparation of that Lone Star Oil case magnificently. This is your fourth year with us, I believe. I am glad to be able to show my appreciation by an increase of salary from your present five hundred a month—that is correct, isn't it?—to ten thousand a year.—No! No! Don't thank me. You're worth it to us!—You must both dine with me soon again!"

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered Simon as he walked back to his own office. He was not altogether satisfied and yet he found it difficult to say why he was not. It was, to be sure, a large salary for a man of his age, but he knew that he was in fact worth more to the firm than several of the partners who were receiving much larger amounts. The question was why had old Robinson given it to him. Why didn't he raise Hepper, who was worth the whole lot of them put together? After his performance at the annual dinner, he should have been either ignominiously fired or given twenty-five thousand a year. And they had not dared to fire him! Good skate, Hepper! O, well——!

Clarice was ecstatic. Ten thousand a year for only two people! Why, it was princely! Now they could get just the sort of apartment they wanted. Simon advised caution. After all, ten thousand wasn't so much—she had already spent nearly twelve hundred on her new clothes, he reminded her!

And then Simon gingerly approached the subject that was nearest his heart. Instead of paying a comparatively

large rent in a fashionable locality up-town why not take a bigger apartment somewhere else, so that there would be plenty of room in case they had children. They *were* going to have children, weren't they? Her face shadowed.

"O, Simon!—Just while we're getting started?—Why not wait?"

"But don't you *want* children?"

She did not answer.

"You forget that I have one child already," she said.

"No, I haven't; but it's not living with us. We don't get anything out of it!"

"How do you mean—'get anything out of it'!"

"Why, I'd like to have it around," he stumbled, baffled by her lack of response. "I thought everybody wanted children. Anyhow, they all seem to have them.—I'd love to have David here. In fact, that's one of the things I had in mind."

Clarice bit her lips.

"I'm not at all sure I would," she said, and the rising color that accompanied her remark intensified her loveliness at the moment. He felt a sharp prick of compunction.

"I'm sorry. I ought to understand how you feel. I suppose it might be an unpleasant reminder to you. After all, it's a boy. If you're perfectly satisfied with where he is, I guess it's all right to leave him there."

"I am perfectly satisfied.—It's in a most excellent place. I know all about the people."

"Seen him lately?"

She flushed again.

"You ought not to ask that, Simon. I've been too busy with you."

"I'm sorry, dear!—I was thoughtless.—Anyhow, I

won't stand in the way any longer. Let's go together! How about Saturday?"

She made an unintelligible sound which he took for an assent.

§ 2

Clarice had a touch of laryngitis on Saturday—which continued over the next—so that it was three weeks before she was able to make the trip to Westchester and during all that time she was silent and depressed. Simon at first attributed it entirely to her indisposition, but as her cold disappeared he began to realize that it was in some way connected with the projected visit to David. She had said nothing and yet he was conscious that, in suggesting that they should go, she felt an implied criticism,—that he had taken an initiative that should have been hers.

Lying with his arm across her body, in their big double bed at Mrs. McGowan's, he wondered if it was not a mistake for him to interfere in any way in her relations with this child of hers by another man. He had passionately assured her that the past was to be wiped out, as if it had never been, so far as that child's begetting was concerned, and for over two months he had been almost successful in his effort to keep his thoughts from adverting to her unfortunate experience as a girl—"if it was unfortunate!" he bravely told himself. Was he wise now to resurrect the past, to interject himself into a situation that, to say the least, must be ungrateful—not to let sleeping dogs lie,—not to leave the whole thing to her?

He was awakened on Friday night by the sound of her sobbing and, receiving no response, discovered her curled into a ball, with her face crushed against the pillow. He cuddled her in his arms.

"What is it, Clarice, darling?"

She gave him a meek kiss, but continued to sob.

"Sweetheart!—Has anything happened?—Don't cry, dear! You know how I love you!"

"That's the—trouble!—I feel frightened that maybe you won't any more! We were so happy, just by ourselves! You'd almost made me forget everything I'd been through. And now it's all coming back again!"

"But darling! I'll always love you just the same! Nothing is going to make the slightest difference. Perhaps I ought not to have butted in,—but I suppose we have got to go sometime to see David. We could wait of course,—but what's the use?"

She nestled her face in the hollow of his shoulder.

"I don't want to think of anything—except you!"

He hugged her tight; she did love him—his Clarice! After a time she said quietly:

"I know you're right, Simon! I can't duck my responsibilities—*our* responsibilities. But everything has been so beautiful. I just wanted to make this part of it last a little longer!"

He was touched—flattered. It was quite true. To see the child just at this time would be like tearing open a half-healed wound. He had been thoughtlessly brutal in suggesting it. He should have left it all to her.

"We needn't go this week, if you don't want to, Clarice."

"It's not that I don't want to!"

"I mean if you think it's better not. Perhaps, on account of your cold, we'd better postpone it until the weather gets warmer. Why don't we?"

"No—we'd better go!"

"But why?—A few weeks more won't make any difference."

"No, Simon." She kissed him sweetly. "Now let's go to sleep!"

But they did not go to sleep. Instead they spent the next three hours proving that nobody had ever loved anybody else as they did each other.

§ 3

As the taxi jounced over the stiff ruts toward Tuckahoe, they were tossed about like camel-riders and the icy wind swept under the ratty fragment of buffalo robe that only partially covered their knees. Several times Clarice thought she could identify the farmhouse and each time found herself mistaken.

"Everything looks so different in winter!" she said, her teeth chattering. Simon pulled the robe about her, contrite for having brought her out in such weather.

The driver, a smart youth with a pine-apple hair-cut and a genius for long-distance expectoration, was not at all sure where the Kellys lived. He thought he'd heard of Joe Kelly,—but he wasn't sure. At the end of forty minutes Simon was satisfied that they were lost, and decided to take matters into his own hands. Climbing out of the car at the next cross-roads, he approached the nearest house. A paper sign greeted him, upon which was printed in large red letters the word "measles," but he knocked. A pale-faced woman with a squalling baby in her arms directed him to the Kellys'—"first road on the left and when you come to a pile of old junk, at the corner of a lane, you turn in 'bout half a mile. Joe Kelly's place is down there. You'll see a sign 'Airedale Puppies.'"

Simon thanked her.

"See you've got measles here."

"I should say we had! They're all over the place!"

He rejoined Clarice and they jerked on to the cemetery of cremated motors.

"Mr. Kelly used to be a coachman. He and his wife are excellent people," explained Clarice. "They were very highly recommended by the hospital superintendent at White Plains."

Their arrival at the Kellys' was signalized by a loud yelping on the part of the Airedales, some of which were confined in a yard and others running free, on wires. Across the way was a chicken-run, the smell from which, combined with that from the near-by stable, made Clarice wrinkle her nose. The proprietor was evidently a jack-of-all-trades, and engaged in an assortment of enterprises, from boarding horses and dogs, to raising chickens and selling butter and eggs,—and the ground was littered with abandoned vehicles, pieces of old iron, empty boxes, dog-crates, egg-cartons, and strewn with feathers. The house stood fifty yards or so from the road and without leaving the car Simon could detect the "measles" sign on the front door. Clarice did not observe it.

The ex-coachman himself, in a red sweater, hearing the disturbance, now appeared in the stable doorway.

"Better not be goin' up to the house," he yelled against the din made by the dogs. "We got measles up there. Phat do y' want?"

"O, dear! I do hope David's not got it!" she cried. "It's so contagious!"

"We've come to see David Hungerford," shouted Simon. "Is he all right?"

Mr. Kelly, who had a heavy growth of pin feathers on his chin, through which a brown line meandered from the corner of his mouth, made no immediate reply to his question. He was evidently of the opinion that to at-

tempt to engage in conversation under such circumstances was a defiance of the Deity.

"You want to see Davie Hungerford?" Mr. Kelly came slowly toward them. "Well, he's not here. The two byes has the measles.—We're after sending him up the road to Mrs. Muldoon's."

Clarice had not spoken to him.

"Are ye his folks, maybe?"

Clarice thrust her head out of the side of the car.

"How do you do, Mr. Kelly? I am David's mother. This is my husband, Mr. Kent. I have been married since I last saw you."

"Glad to meet you again, ma'am! Glad to meet you, sir." Kelly touched his forelock. "Well, he ain't got it yet. But we didn't want to take no chances."

"How is he?" asked Simon.

"O, David's all right! He's fine!"

"How do we get to Mrs. Muldoon's?"

"First house on the right after you reach the head of the lane."

Simon was already filled with misgivings. Clarice seemed to read his mind.

"It's really lovely here in summer," she said. "And the children have the dogs and chickens to play with.—Just now, of course, it looks pretty bleak."

"It does that!—Does he go to school?"

"Why, Simon! He's much too young!"

"He's six, isn't he?—That's not too young."

"But it's so much better for him to be living out here in the country—where he can breathe the fresh air."

"I bet they never open the windows!"

"I'm sure the Kellys are very careful people!" replied Clarice. "Their sending David away shows that. I should have felt dreadfully if he had caught the measles."

They found Mrs. Muldoon's without difficulty, and with relief assured themselves that no "measles"—at any rate none as yet detected—were being harbored there. She was very old and very deaf but, after mastering the distinction between their wanting to see David Hungerford and their being hungry, as she had first supposed, she invited them into the kitchen and promised to go fetch him at once. There were but two rooms on the ground floor, the other being a bedroom and, although the floors were clean, every window was tight shut and the atmosphere was thick with the odor of cabbage, suds, and cooking.

As they sat waiting on either side of the table in that stuffy kitchen, listening to the explosive ticking of the alarm clock on the shelf, it came over Simon that this was the strangest and perhaps the most important moment in his life—this moment when into it was about to enter that other life which rightfully should have been a continuation of his own. Up to this time its existence had been a purely academic thing,—now, it assumed a tremendous significance, almost as much as if he had been the child's father. She was absolutely responsible for it. And hence so was he. There was nothing in their lives so important as its welfare—yet they had hardly given it a thought. At least he had not. But by what right was he about to interfere with the child of another? Could he give it that selfless devotion that every child deserved of a parent? Suppose he hated it? Or grew ultimately to hate it? How would that affect his relations with this woman whom he so loved? Clarice saw the seriousness of his expression and gave him a comprehending, wistful smile.

"They certainly keep it hot enough in here!" she said, throwing open her gray squirrel coat.

He reflected that this was not precisely the remark one

might have expected of a woman impatient to see her offspring. What were her feelings toward it? Funny she had not told him more about the child. She had, in fact, volunteered absolutely nothing. She sat there listlessly and apparently rather bored,—and as the clock ticked, Simon for the first time began to wonder if he really knew Clarice.

There were steps on the piazza and Mrs. Muldoon opened the kitchen-door, pushing before her a spindle-legged little boy, so small that it seemed impossible he should be six years old. He hung back, with his eyes on the floor, clasping a piece of automobile tire in his red bare hands and with his head bent so that Simon could not see his face.

Clarice leaned forward and held out her arms:

"Aren't you going to say how do you do to your mother, David?"

But the child kept his face resolutely away.

"Come David! Kiss your mother!" admonished Clarice. "You mustn't act that way when we have come all the way from New York to see you!"

"Just think of that!" exclaimed Mrs. Muldoon. "Your papa and mamma have come all the way from New York!"

Simon presently discovered that the child was peeking at him from under the rim of his worsted cap.

"Hello, old fellow!" he said, grinning. "What's that you have there?"

David shyly raised his head. It seemed preposterously large for his tiny body, his brown eyes enormous. So far as Simon was able to observe, the little face contained no likeness to Clarice.

"It's my subway," he answered seriously, in a husky voice.

"Let's see it!"

David came over and Simon put his arm about him. As he did so a warm tide of sympathy for this little nomad welled into his heart.

Mrs. Muldoon had taken herself off.

"They go in this end and they come out that end," explained David, laying the tire on the floor, and Simon saw that although he wore perfectly good shoes he had no rubbers on and that his feet were soaking.

Clarice pulled over her chair.

"Are you glad to see mamma, David?" she said.

"Yes, ma'am," said David in an embarrassed fashion. "But I'm glad to see my papa, too," he added, nestling against Simon's knees.

"Do you like it here?" inquired Simon, disregarding the error in relationship for the moment.

"Pretty well."

"As much as Mrs. Kelly's?"

"I don't like Mrs. Kelly's very much."

"Why not?"

"The big boys pinch me sometimes."

"Do they do anything else to you?"

"They make faces at me and say 'Ar-r-rh'!"

"Do you get enough to eat?"

"Mostly I do."

"Haven't you got any rubbers or mittens?"

"I don't know. I don't think so."

"Do you go to school?"

"There isn't any school.—I play with myself instead."

Simon took David's face between his hands and looked into his big wistful eyes. The mouth was long and had a slight downward curve. Poor, fatherless little kid! The very fact that the child was clean and not actually maltreated somehow made the fact of its partial neglect

the more pathetic to Simon. It was entitled to and could have had so much more!

"We can't leave this child here, Clarice!" he told her. "Mrs. Muldoon no doubt means all right enough, but look at his poor little feet! And his hands! It's a wonder he hasn't caught pneumonia long ago!—Besides, although I don't know whose fault it is, he's frightfully undernourished. Probably he's not happy and hasn't enough appetite. The big boys nag him. And he ought to go to school!"

"I don't know any better place.—The Kellys won't be having the measles forever and we can buy him rubbers and mittens this afternoon at White Plains.—It's lovely out here in spring."

"But he isn't happy!"

"I know he says so, and I'm very sorry if it's true. I suppose all children say that! But we've got to keep him somewhere."

Then Simon crossed the Rubicon.

"Why not take him with us?"

She looked at him incredulously.

"Do you mean to New York?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"But we've no place for him. There's hardly space to turn around as it is.—Not even a bed."

"Maybe we can get another room.—I'll call up Mrs. McGowan on the telephone and find out."

"O, Simon!"

Her voice was sadly reproachful.

"I know how you feel about it!" he answered sympathetically. "He's a reminder of something you'd rather forget, but we can't escape the consequences of our mistakes, and if I can stand it you ought to be able to. It really isn't fair to the kid to leave him out here. You

don't want him to grow up into another little Kelly, do you? And that's just what would happen. I'm surprised he speaks as well as he does!"

Clarice went to the window and looked out for several minutes.

"Of course you're right, Simon dear!" she said at length. "You always are. But it is going to make such a difference—don't you think we had better wait to make the arrangements—only a week or two?"

"No, he oughtn't to stay here another night!" declared Simon with conviction. "You ought to get those shoes off him this very minute!—If you'll attend to that, I'll go call up Mrs. McGowan."

"Very well!" said Clarice.

Thus it was that Simon became a father.

§ 4

Clarice showed an admirable fortitude in meeting the practical difficulties presented by the addition of David to their ménage, and Mrs. McGowan had been able to place at their disposal a vacant hall bedroom on the same floor as their own. By Davis, and such as had any knowledge of his affairs, Simon let it be understood that the child was the orphan of an apocryphal relative recently deceased and that Clarice and he would probably ultimately adopt it. The City and Country School, conveniently located on 12th Street, solved not only the problem of David's education, but of his luncheon and afternoon recreation as well, and for the next month they resumed their original practice of taking their evening meal at the Wilmerding and surrendered the gay life for an enforced domesticity at University Place. Moving into larger quarters was now imperative and Clarice,

who was in daily consultation with Mr. Bibby, did nothing but talk about apartments and pore over plans.

Simon agreed, in view of his "raise" at the office, to go as high as twenty-five hundred, and for this they were able in due course to secure a compressed suite just off Park Avenue in the upper Eighties, consisting of two bedrooms, bath, dining-room, sitting-room, kitchen, and a single servant's room. Into this they moved upon the 1st of May, David being transferred to the University School on 72d Street West, to which Simon walked with him each morning and from which the younger sister of their "general" girl fetched him home at the end of the afternoon. Clarice had scrapped all their old furniture and the apartment, if small and scantily furnished, was in the best possible taste.

"Now we can really begin to live!" she declared. "It isn't much, but at least it's respectable and, if necessary, we needn't be ashamed to have our friends here!"

David, in spite of being deprived of the country air of Westchester, proceeded to thrive enormously and, even before their hegira from University Place, had put on five full pounds. He was a shy, silent child, quick at his lessons, affectionate and docile, and made little or no trouble. Simon and he had breakfast together at an early hour while Clarice was still asleep, and then came the walk across Central Park, which they entered just above the Metropolitan Museum and, passing the obelisk, quartered by the "Belvedere" and the "Shakespeare's Garden." Simon delighted in teaching David what he knew of the birds and early spring flowers, and they had no end of fun together, occasionally varying their route to take in the menagerie and "carousel."

But Simon did not leave University Place without a pang. The three years he had spent there with Otto

had been very happy ones,—care-free years, vivid with new experiences, and filled with the satisfying consciousness of achievement. He had enough philosophy to see that money-grubbing could have a spiritual side, and at first the towering down-town buildings pointing to the skies symbolized for him the idealistic aspect latent in all creative human endeavor rather than the evidence of the supremacy of the individual acquisitive instinct. For in those dingy rooms he and Otto had tended the sacred fire of their passion for the law; here they had seen their visions and dreamed their dreams. He missed the dingy but homelike atmosphere of their old quarters, with the books and broken-down furniture and smell of tobacco; he missed Ora and Emmeline and the Pennycuicks, in spite of their disapproval of Clarice and their obvious suspicions about David; he missed the tin tub and the gas-stove and the big double bed and Mrs. McGowan.

Compared to University Place the standardized cubicles in which they now dwelt had no personality whatever. He felt like a swallow living in a mud bank—albeit the mud bank had a façade of fireproof brick, a jumpy elevator, a negro doorman in green livery, acres of tiled floors, steam-heat that hissed and a permanent smell of paint. Everything in their apartment was new and cheap, from the *tête de nègre* carpet-rugs to the glossy dining-room table and the "cocktail set" on the even more glossy sideboard with the plate-glass mirror in the back. There was not a stick of furniture in the place that Simon recognized and Clarice had made no provision for his books.

"They look so shabby! If they were nicely bound it would be different,—but these are so faded, Simon, and half the backs are coming off!—I tell you what—we can have some shelves made and put them out in the hall."

So at a cost of sixty-odd dollars Simon's library was

housed in the passage between their bedroom and David's. But, however new and aseptic the apartment, the cleverness of the architect had resulted in making it such a model of condensation that in it one seemed to be everywhere at the same time, so that if Simon were sitting in the parlor he felt as though he had an arm in the dining-room and one leg in the kitchen. To write there was impossible.

"Where am I supposed to work?"

"You never *did* do any work at home, darling. The Public Library is the best place for you to write in, don't you think so, my sweet?"

However, it was "smart" in the sense of being severe and slathered all over with white paint, and it was where Clarice wanted to be, and it rented for only twenty-five hundred dollars.

"Of course,—come to think of it—especially with only one maid, we can't do any entertaining here," she said, "except cocktails and that sort of thing. We shall have to take our friends to restaurants, but that is really better and loads more fun. Anyhow we're settled at last! I'm so glad now we didn't hurry, aren't you? You'll be surprised at what a difference being up-town will make about knowing people. I've counted forty-two I know quite well within six blocks."

"It's certainly much better for David to be near the Park," agreed Simon.

Clarice decided not to give a tea or even to send out cards, for if she did there would be a lot of people she'd have to include that she didn't want.

"Take Doris Kenyon, for instance.—I never realized how common she was until the other day. I'm sure I don't want her hanging around all the time, as she would be. She'd gum everything if any really nice person hap-

pened to drop in while she was here." She mused—pencil in hand. "Simon, I'm going to start an entirely new list; I'm going to build on the Munsons and just a few of the very smartest people I know. Life is too short to waste on the other kind. But we must try to make it attractive to your men friends, Simon. They are the ones who really count. You must try and get them in the habit of dropping in on the way up-town."

"All right. I'll suggest it to Davis!—He's the only really smart man I know!"

"Don't make too much fun of Davis!" warned Clarice. "He told me confidentially that he made twenty-three thousand dollars last year and that, if he'd had an organization of his own, he could have made fifty."

"Good for little Davie!"

"Did you ever think, Simon, that it might be an excellent thing for you to go in with him—start a firm, I mean?"

"*Davis!*"

"Yes, why not?—He could get all sorts of business. I know he'd love to have you with him. He thinks you're one of the best lawyers in New York."

"Praise from Sir Hubert!"

"I bet you'd make a killing! Look at that Lone Star Oil Case you told me about. You're doing all the work and the firm will probably make a hundred-thousand-dollar fee! If you were practising independently you could have it all for yourself."

"But Davis doesn't know anything!"

"He knows enough to make money!"

"He's just a legal bootlegger!"

"I don't know what that means, but I know Davis is honest."

"From his own point of view no doubt."

"Do you mean that he isn't—from yours?"

"No, I don't mean that. I've no doubt he serves a purpose. But he's really only a lawyer by courtesy—he's a commission broker."

"Well, if he makes more money that way why isn't he just as good a kind of lawyer as yours?"

"O, you don't understand, Clarice!—And if you don't—" he added half to himself—"I couldn't make you!"

Davis lived up to Simon's figurative description of him by coming across handsomely with a belated wedding present in the shape of a beautiful little cabinet which, when unlocked and opened, disclosed a miniature bar completely furnished.

"My theories of personal liberty,—" admitted Simon as they christened it, "are in full accord with the spirit exhibited herein."

CHAPTER VIII

§ 1

And then the octopus known as "business" reached out and twined its tentacles about Simon's feet and hands and drew him down struggling beneath the surface. Van Hamm *vs.* The Great Western & Lone Star Oil Co. had been set peremptorily for trial and there was nobody to try it! Mr. Myer, for the first time in his professional life, was "too ill to appear in court,"—not physically, to be sure, but officially,—for Mr. Myer, being accustomed to try his cases only when, as, and how he pleased and not wishing to go into court on the day set, had requested an adjournment upon the well-established ground that he was sick in bed, although he was at that moment consulting with a client in his office. The adjournment being unexpectedly refused, Mr. Myer had repaired to his home, put on a pair of pyjamas without removing his clothes, sent for his physician, and climbed between the sheets.

"I'm a sick man, Jake—huh? Gimme a good strong affidavit—to the effect that I'm too ill to appear—eh?—you know the sort that goes—huh—and send it down to Judge Hunt by special messenger right off."

"Sure. How do you feel?"

"Rotten!" groaned Mr. Myer. "I must ha' caught cold and it struck into my lungs, eh?—I'll telephone you later how I'm getting on—huh."

Doctor Lowenbrau did not comment on either his client's temperature or pulse, and Mr. Myer failed to explain that in event the affidavit failed of its purpose he

did not wish to be precluded from trying the case. Unfortunately, although Doctor Lowenbrau's affidavit, drawn with due regard to his client's injunction, stated that Mr. Myer was confined to his bed with threatened pneumonia, Judge Hunt declared that the trial must go on, that a firm as distinguished as Robinson, Myer & Burr certainly must have some one upon its staff competent to present the case, and that any further adjournment would be a disgrace.

"It's a damned outrage!" raved Myer from his uptown library from whence, having divested himself of his pyjamas, he was telephoning: "Hunt oughtn't to have played me a trick like that! Did you talk to him?"

"I talked to him!" replied Simon. "And he said that unless we were ready to go on at two o'clock he would give the plaintiff a default. What do you want me to do?"

"Had he read Lowenbrau's affidavit?"

"Sure."

"What did it say?"

"That you were seriously ill with incipient pneumonia, confined to your bed under his professional care, and that in his opinion it would be suicidal for you to leave it in less than a week."

"In less than a week—eh! I didn't tell the damn fool to say that!—What—huh—did Hunt say?"

"He said he was sorry."

"My God!" Through the telephone Simon could hear Myer pounding on the table. "Well, you'll have to go ahead and try it yourself.—Stall all you can—eh. I may make an—huh—unexpectedly rapid recovery."

Mr. Myer, thus neatly hoist by his own petard, and being "estopped" by his physician's sworn statement from appearing in public, was forced to remain under cover the rest of the week. He could not afford to have

a judge of the District Court of the United States suspect that the latter had been trifled with even to so slight a degree as that involved in a perjured affidavit for the purpose of securing an adjournment. Robinson, Myer & Burr were as much members of the "bankruptcy bar" as of any other, where to be in good standing with the judge was a *sine qua non* of success. They had had nine receiverships in their office, already, since January.

"He's too high hat, that fellow!" shouted Myer in hysterics. "Yeh!—Go ahead and try it."

So Simon tried Van Hamm *vs.* The Great Western & Lone Star Oil Company and became—momentarily at least—famous. Myer confessed afterward that it was a lucky thing for all of them that he had,—that Simon's big play on the last day was what won the case,—and that personally he should not have had the nerve to disavow his own witness. It was probably true that Mr. Myer's method of trying it would not have lessened the odor of what was probably one of the most notorious cases ever tried in the Post-Office building. Simon declared that they won, not because they deserved to win, but because the other side deserved to lose more than they did. They were all liars and crooks—every mother's son of them—including Van Hamm's lawyer, but up to the last day the sum total of veracity—such as was discernible—seemed to be in favor of the plaintiff. Then the pot cracked and everybody began playing deuces wild. Van Hamm, recalled, testified to an obviously cooked-up conversation with "Colonel Bill" Babson, in the back room of a saloon in Oklahoma City, no others being present, on a certain date in July, 1920. It was childish; unnecessary; transparently false. A simple denial from Babson would have disposed of it forever, for Simon knew that upon that date Babson was in St. Louis,

and could have proved it. But facts were no longer of interest to the gun-toter. Drama was what he wanted. Simon saw him beckon a couple of trusty friends into the corridor. Returning shortly thereafter Babson signalled that he wished to be put upon the stand in rebuttal.

"Tell me, Mr. Babson,—were you in Oklahoma City on July 19, 1920?" asked Simon perfunctorily.

With every ear in the court-room awaiting his denial, "Colonel Bill" fooled them all.

"I was," said he innocently.

"You *were?*"

"Yeh,—that's what I said!"

Simon shuffled his notes. The audacity of the man!

"Did you have a talk in the Palace Hotel with Mr. Van Hamm?"

"I did—but not what he said."

"Was anybody else there besides you and him?"

"Colonel Bill" blandly twirled his mustache. Glancing down at the jury he replied in casual tones:

"There was. There was him and me and Jeff Dwyer and Tom Nason—the four of us."

In a flash Simon saw Babson's purpose. Obviously the oil man thought it safer to admit the conversation and twist it to his own advantage by calling supporting witnesses, than merely to deny its occurrence upon his own word alone. Simon's eyes turned to steel.

"Are you sure you were there on that day?"

"Posilootly!—And Dwyer and Nason will say I was too!"

Simon turned to Judge Hunt.

"In that case, your honor, I beg leave to tell the jury that in my opinion the witness is misstating the facts. He was not in Oklahoma City on the day in question. The conversation testified to never took place. He is

foolish enough to imagine that the easiest way to combat one lie is with another. I withdraw him. So far as this aspect of the evidence is concerned I disavow him. I would withdraw from the case, were it not for the fact that my client is the corporation and not Colonel Babson personally, and that the interests of the other stockholders are involved. In making this statement I do not for one moment intend to have the jury infer that I believe the plaintiff is entitled to a verdict. I think that he is a bigger liar than Colonel Babson."

Judge Hunt suppressed a smile. Turning to the witness he said:

"Colonel Babson, do you wish to correct your testimony? Were you in Oklahoma City on July 19, 1920?"

Colonel Babson, who had been leaning forward in a threatening manner during Simon's remarks, twisted toward the judge uneasily.

"Well, I *thought* I was, Judge. But if Mr. Kent says I wasn't, I guess I must be mistaken. That young feller usually knows what he's talking about!"

The foreman of the jury, deeming this to be a confirmation of the general attitude, nodded at Simon.

"Hadn't you better put the categorical question to him?" asked the judge.

"Very well," replied Simon. "Did you, or did you not, have the conversation just related, with Mr. Van Hamm at any time or place?"

"I did *not!*" asserted the doughty colonel.

"That's all—and we rest!"

"Plaintiff rests."

"Go to the jury," directed Judge Hunt, and Simon arose.

"Gentlemen," he said with a wry smile, "the Ananias Club will now adjourn."

Three hours later the jury returned a verdict in favor of the Great Western & Lone Star Oil Company, of three hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, and costs, letting it be understood that they had disregarded all the oral evidence in the case and had considered only the written documents and the undisputed facts—as Simon had suggested. The first to congratulate the victor was none other than Colonel "Bill" Babson.

"You're certainly a crackerjack lawyer, son—and I guess you saved your Uncle Bill's bacon for him! Van Hamm's waiting for me. Join us in a little drink?"

"With *Van Hamm?*"

"Sure! Why not? It's all in the day's work. This ain't the first time I've soaked him—or he me. We're old friends. Come along."

But Simon had an engagement at the office.

Myer was enthusiastic. He acclaimed Simon as the coming leader of the trial bar.

"You mustn't have—huh—any personal feeling against Babson," he said—"he's really a very decent sort—eh?"

"He's a damned highbinder and a most inartistic liar," said Simon.

"But he's—huh—a very good client of our office," reminded Myer.

The Evening Sun carried a front-page story about the trial, under the caption "Honesty the Best Policy," with a detailed personal description of "a young lawyer, named Kent, who in some ways suggests the late Joseph H. Choate."

Clarice was bubbling with delight.

"I *knew* you'd be famous, Simon darling!" she cried, clutching his neck. "It's come even sooner than I expected.—Now you'll be a partner in no time!—Why

don't you invite that Colonel Babson up to dinner with us? He sounds awfully interesting!"

But it was George Munson who explained the profound elation with which the news of Simon's success had been received in the office of Robinson, Myer & Burr.

"You holy innocent!—Aren't you on?—Didn't you know that out of the Lone Star Oil Company's fifty thousand shares of capital stock Mrs. Rosie Myer owns seventeen thousand five hundred?"

§ 2

Simon began to be pointed out as the "comer" in Robinson, Myer & Burr. His salary was not immediately raised again, but he was given a much larger office, adjoining that of Myer, and made to feel that he had consolidated his position with the firm. He joined the Bar Association and the Bankers' Club and was authorized to entertain his more important clients at the firm's expense, and while he did not avail himself of this privilege, he frequently found himself lunching with the merchants, railroad, and mining men with whom he was thrown in contact. On these occasions if Myer or Robinson was of the party, he was apt to say: "Hand your luncheon-vouchers to the cashier at the end of the month and he'll give you a check."

Colonel Babson, who evinced a fondness for Simon inexplicable otherwise than as a genuine liking, was in and out of the office constantly. And he exhibited an almost equal admiration for Clarice.

"—I've taken a heap big shine to your old man, Mis' Kent. He's some beby, believe me!—And the gang all like him. You just come along out to Texas and let me give you a good time!"

"Thanks so much, 'Colonel Bill'!—Have just another little cocktail? That's right!—O, I'm afraid Mr. Robinson would never let Simon go. He's *so* busy! And they rely on him so much. I'll tell you what *I* think!—Only you mustn't repeat it to a living soul!—And that is that without Simon the firm would go to pieces. They rely on him for absolutely everything, you know!—And they work him to *death!*—I suppose I shouldn't say that,—but I just can't help it!—No, I guess if you want to give me—us, I mean—a good time you'll have to do it *here!*"

"Colonel Bill" responded in true Western fashion, and Simon, who knew nothing of the foregoing conversation and had not been consulted about the acceptance of the invitation, was dismayed to find himself dining with Clarice, the Colonel, and a small party of Babson's more intimate friends, in a private dining-room of a Park Avenue hotel, the only other women present being two prim little maiden aunts belonging to the Colonel, from Brooklyn.

"Mis' Kent—I want you to be friends with my Aunt Hester and my Aunt Lucilla! Two of the finest women God ever made, even if they don't live in his country!"

They were shy, Quakerish little things, with gray bonnets perched on their tiny birdlike heads, but they were very sweet and Clarice made a great fuss over them.

"Once a year—when I come on from Houston—I always have a little party for Aunt Hester and Aunt Lucilla!" beamed "Colonel Bill." "Give us some music, boys!—Here, you niggers, get to work!"

"He gives such lovely parties!" confided Aunt Lucilla to Clarice.

"Colonel Bill" had spared no expense and, besides procuring an orchestra and most of the champagne east of

the Alleghanies, had caused a lattice wainscot to be built around the walls and filled with massed roses. Everybody, including Simon, had a genuinely good time, and toward half-past nine, they adjourned in a procession of taxis to the Astor Theatre, where "Colonel Bill" had taken all the boxes in the house.

Simon found himself sitting between little Aunt Lucilla and a burly man with a ruddy clean-shaven face surmounted by a shock of thick snow-white hair, Buckley Thorn, president of the Zonamex Copper Company. During the last intermission, while they sauntered out together for a cigarette, Thorn said:

"It's a great old Bill!—Generous as they make 'em! Never forgets a friend!—He thinks the world of you, too. Swears you saved his skin in that Van Hamm case.—Guess you did, at that.—Had a few thousand shares of the stock myself.—By the way, I've got a little matter I'd like to have you attend to for me, if you will. It's personal, otherwise I'd have to take it to old Clarkson; he's the attorney for my company, you know. But this is my own affair."

Clarice was ecstatic.

"Did he? How wonderful! Nothing can stop you now, Simon!" she cried excitedly when he told her about it on their way home. "Buckley Thorn is one of the biggest men in the copper business. Don't you remember reading about his divorce a couple of years ago? He's worth millions! O, you Simon! Your fortune's made!—If you play it right you can get all those men for your personal clients."

"They're an awful bunch of roughnecks!"

"What if they are?—They're the men who are running things. "Colonel Bill" is all right enough in his way, but Buckley Thorn is high class. He goes around with really

swell people. He was at that dinner Larry Devereaux gave for the Prince of Wales when he was over here."

"My God, Clarice! How you do remember such things!"

She took his hand between hers, patted it, and lifted it to her lips.

"You must leave it all to your little Clarice!"

"What shall I leave?"

"Oh—everything!—Simon, you're such a darling!—I *do* love you!—Don't you suppose we could afford a car?"

"What kind of a car?"

"A motor—just a very inexpensive one. I could learn to run it myself and it wouldn't cost hardly anything!"

"But I thought you couldn't afford a nurse for David. How the deuce can we afford a motor?"

"David doesn't need anybody. Miranda is all right. They get along beautifully.—But a car would be a real asset, Simon! We could ask people to go out with us and entertain them a little in that way."

Simon did not see it. They had better wait and find how they were coming out, he said. But under the circumstances he could not very well object to having Davis take Clarice out in his roadster,—there was only room for two. He was glad that she had the chance to get into the country that way occasionally. He and David would watch them disappear into the traffic and then walk over to the park together and spend the afternoon rowing on the lake and feeding the squirrels. Once when Davis had motored Clarice out to Westchester for lunch Simon took David to a vaudeville show. The curtain was already up when they arrived and Simon, hurrying down the aisle to their seats, found that David was missing. Going back he found him standing motionless at the en-

trance of the aisle, his eyes glued in wonder upon the stage.

"Come along, old top!" he said. "You'll get a better view down in front!" Grasping the small hand, he led him to the first row.

David rarely laughed; and even his smiles were shy and infrequent, but now as he sat looking across the footlights at the Irish comedian, his little mouth began to twitch and he burst into an hysterical giggle. Presently he was kicking his heels and squealing with delight.

"How did you like the show?" asked Clarice when David came in to kiss them good night.

David looked down at the floor.

"Pret-ty well," he answered gravely.

"I really never saw such an unresponsive child!" she declared. "I don't think he deserves to have you take him to the theatre!"

§ 3

Clarice "built" successfully upon the Munsons. She had spotted them as having the right sort of connections and, once she had put her nose to a social trail, she kept it there until she had run her quarry to earth. Simon ordered a new dress-suit, as requested,—and a new Tuxedo as well.

"I wouldn't change my social approach at all, if I were you, Simon," she remarked suddenly one day, after studying him. "I used to think you were a little too rough and blunt,—but I believe now that people sort of like it. If it wasn't for your smile—! But you *have* got a nice smile, dear!"

"Thanks! I'll do my best to stay rough and blunt."

"O, Simon!—But you really *must* learn how to play

bridge. You might as well give up trying to know people if you don't play—and play well. In fact, I hope nobody will ask us for the week-end until you know how. There wouldn't be anything for us to do except hang around and look on, and we'd feel absolutely out of it.—So much depends on the first impression one makes."

"Do you want to make an impression as a bridge player?"

"I want to make an impression as a woman of the world married to a clever man of the same sort."

"And whom do you expect to ask us a week-ending?"

"O, lots of people!—Alice Munson's mother has a big place up at Ardsley and she's sure to invite us. And then there's Mr. Robinson and——"

"What's happened to the Hungerfords?"

"They're abroad—at least Muriel is.—What's the matter with Buckley Thorn! He's got a wonderful place down at Westbury right in the heart of the polo-playing crowd. He'll ask us. In fact, he's the most important person there is for us to cultivate just now.

"Well, I haven't got any time to give to cards!" affirmed Simon. "I haven't got time for anything except work at the office. I don't read, I don't write; I do nothing but yap all day down among a lot of squabbling vultures that are trying to pick the bones of a bank or a mine or a railroad, and I get up-town just in time to jerk on a glad suit that's too tight for me and stick my neck through a shirt like a washboard and rush out to the Munsons', or somewhere else, to swig re-denatured alcohol and eat canned mushrooms and fillet of beef and listen to a lot of stupid talk about things that I don't give a damn about!"

"Why, Simon!" Clarice looked horrified.

"I said it!"

"Don't you like our friends?"

"Of course I like 'em but—I'd like a little time with you alone, dear,—or by myself!"

Even the plaintive sweetness of his explanation did not assuage Clarice's wounded feelings. He had spoken hastily, with his customary brutal frankness, and she knew that he meant it; she was hurt and showed it. In penance Simon suffered himself to be taught the hated game and to his surprise found himself quickly absorbed in it. After all, it was, as Clarice had said, part of the equipment of the modern educated man. He was aware of a pleasurable tax upon his intellectual powers, but he did not realize that one of the reasons why he found it so agreeable was that it afforded a relief from Clarice's interminable chatter about society and success.

§ 4

Clarice counted her chickens while they were still in the shell and did not miss a chick. Gladys's mother did invite them to Ardsley, not only for one week-end, but for several, and Clarice managed to meet most of the Sleepy Hollow Country Club set.

Mother Hungerford had returned from her midwinter Mediterranean junket bulging with condiments from the Near East, and radiating quaint chit-chat about the Holy Sepulchre, "the Pyorrhea," and the first and last time she ever "set on a camel." With fifteen pounds added to her weight, she was a ghastly and flatulent reminder that in the midst of life we are under sentence to heredity. As soon as David's school closed Clarice induced her to carry him off to the country, a proceeding suffered by Simon only for the sake of the boy's health,

for New York was hot and David naturally was not included on their house-parties.

Buckley Thorn had expressed his satisfaction with the manner in which Simon had handled his business by sending him more—this time a matter involving a considerable sum. Clarice insisted that on the strength of it he ought to be made a member of the firm.

"But this is only my fourth year with them!" protested Simon.

"I don't care. It isn't how long you've been there, but what you're worth to them. Look what Davis makes! With all this new business you're getting—Buckley Thorn's for instance—they ought at least to put you on a profit-sharing basis,—go fifty-fifty with you on the fees you bring in."

"I don't think they'd do that—and keep on paying me ten thousand a year besides."

"Then give up your salary."

"It would be too risky!"

"No, it wouldn't! You'd make twice that in fees. George Munson says they charged the Lone Star Oil Company fifty thousand dollars in the Van Hamm matter,—and after this all "Colonel Bill's" business will go to you direct. If you left the firm now and started out for yourself, he'd follow you. And then there's Buckley Thorn,—Simon, you'll have all the clients you want! Those men up at the Sleepy Hollow Club were just crazy about you!—I wish Mr. Thorn would ask us down to Westbury!"

"Why should he?"

"Why shouldn't he?"

"We're nothing to him, Clarice. My relations to Thorn are purely professional."

"Make them personal, then."

"Why should I?"

"Because, Simon stupid, that's the way to get ahead!"

"I've told you a thousand times I don't want to get ahead that way."

Clarice shrugged her shoulders.

"It's only for your sake!" she said, biting her lip.

Mr. Robinson had asked them to spend the week of July 4th with his sister and himself at Greenwich, and Clarice informed Simon that she purposed upon that occasion to throw a scare into the old man and, if necessary, read him the riot act.

"If we could only tell him that we were going to visit Buckley Thorn at Westbury, old Polonius would give you anything I asked for! I've discovered something about him, Simon!—He likes pretty women and he's *got a social inferiority complex!* He'd love to have a few really smart clients. Socially he's nothing, and he knows it. And there's nobody in the firm who is—except George Munson. If you could get in with the Westbury crowd and bring in a few Whitneys or Burdens, or even a swell Jew or two, Robinson would make you a member of the firm in no time."

"A swell chance, I have, to be a swell!"

"You can be the smartest lawyer in New York!—Look at old Vincent Pepperill!"

"What about him?"

"You know how swell he is! He's a director of the Metropolitan Opera and on everything. And look at Lloyd Maitland, who married Diana Kayne. He was nobody at all—just a law clerk in Mr. Pepperill's office—and her father went bankrupt and yet they're the smartest couple in the young married set to-day."

"What's the difference between a swell person and a smart one?"

Clarice pondered.

"We-el I know myself but I don't know how to express it exactly."

"Which are we?"

"We're going to be smart."

"How soon?"

"Six months, maybe,—as soon as we get that invite from Buckley Thorn."

"Let me know when it comes," admonished Simon, "so I can buy myself a lavender waistcoat and a pair of mauve-colored spats."

It was within less than two weeks that Simon, coming home late from the office, was met on opening the door of the apartment by the joyful jingle of cracked ice. Glancing into the drawing-room he beheld Davis Pettibone, pinkly resplendent in close-fitting dinner-jacket and onyx studs, shaking a part of his wedding-present after the manner of a professional barkeeper.

"Hello, 'What-the-Man-will-wear'!" remarked Simon. "What are you doing?"

"Mixing a 'Widow's Kiss'—for your guests."

"My guests!"

"Didn't you know you were having a dinner-party?"

"I did not."

"Well, you are!" He waved toward the minute dining-room, where covers had been laid for six. On the centre of the table was a large bowl of roses. A puffy man in a dress-suit, much too small for him, was putting the last touches to glass and silver.

"Hello! Where did you come from?" asked Simon.

The waiter stopped what he was doing and came over.

"Sherry's, sir.—Would you mind telling me if there are any liqueur-glasses?"

"I don't know. There aren't any liqueurs."

"I beg your pardon, sir,—but there are."

"That's right, Red!" interrupted Davis. "I brought 'em. Clarice didn't want to bother you. We've got everything.—'S going to be a grand affair. Hop into your togs!"

Clarice appeared at that moment, beautiful in the silver-spangled gown that he had seen only once before—at the festal banquet of Robinson, Myer & Burr.

"What's up, darling?—My, you're lovely!"

He kissed her, mollified, but puzzled.

"Careful of my hair!—Um! There! Enough—naughty boy!"

"Who's coming?"

"I won't tell you!—Now run! Hurry or there won't be any cocktails left for you!"

Simon found his clothes neatly arranged for him upon a chair, the studs already in his shirt,—the hired butler was earning his money, or more probably looking for a tip! When he emerged the others were already there,—Gladys Munson, George, and Buckley Thorn. They greeted him with cheers. Davis was shaking another round.

"There's yours!" he said as he filled the glasses over again. "And there's the one you missed!"

Simon drank them both. As he looked at his Clarice, more exquisite than he had ever seen her, and at the svelte and saucy Gladys, he told himself that one could not have found two better-looking women anywhere. Yes,—smart! by heck!

The hired butler threw open the glass doors.

"Dinner is served!" he said, bowing to Clarice.

The occasion was a brilliant success. Clarice kept them all going, and Davis's stories were just *risqué* enough to put the whole affair on a basis of cosey intimacy. In spite

of the size of the dining-room the service was managed deftly, there was none of the usual clatter from the pantry, and although the courses were few, the food was of the best, the fresh caviare served in a large cake of ice being unanimously approved. Thorn, who was patently enjoying himself, more than once commented upon the excellence of Clarice's cook. Champagne appeared immediately after the caviare and kept reappearing throughout the evening. In spite of a slight feeling of uneasiness about expense, Simon was proud of Clarice. After all, she did know what was what! And this feeling was clearly shared by Buckley Thorn, who, when the girls left them, remarked significantly: "You're a lucky fellow, Kent, in more ways than one! Your wife is one of the most charming women I have ever met."

"Well?" exclaimed Clarice, as the descending elevator smothered the farewells of their departing guests. Simon put both arms about her.

"You're a wonder, Clarice!"

The butler was still lurking in the dining-room. Clarice handed him a five-dollar-bill.

"You did very well," she said graciously. "That is for yourself. Good night."

"Good night, madam.—Thank you, madam."

They stood at the window looking down over the softly glowing city, his arm about her shoulders.

"How much did this caper cost us?" he asked jokingly.

"I shan't tell you!" she replied. "It doesn't make the slightest difference.—Buckley has asked us down over next Sunday."

§ 5

"Won't you ever flirt with me, Simon?—Just the least little bit?" Gladys, clinging to his sleeve as she balanced

herself on the edge of the veranda in the moonlight, all but rested her head on his shoulder. The shoulder imperceptibly swayed back out of reach.

"You're a darling, Simon, but you're awfully slow. If you want to keep up with this bunch you'll have to develop a little more speed.—Give me a cigarette."

From the open windows behind them came the click and snap of cards dexterously shuffled and dealt, the intermittent patter of the bridge-table. At their feet the lawn rolled like a mist-veiled ocean toward the Sound. It was a scene set for romance but Gladys did not stir Simon in the least.

"I'm geared to first.—You call me a yokel? I am!"

"Until you said that I thought you a holy innocent, Simon!"

"Not innocent—satisfied. I'm a poor prospect for any vamp."

"You're certainly in love with your wife."

"Yep—old-fashioned husband."

"Well, I don't blame you! She'll make you President some day. But aren't you uncomfortable with a wife as beautiful as that?"

"Not a particle! Why should I be?"

Gladys let the smoke trickle through her thin nostrils.

"You know what this Long Island crowd is like. They're no respecters of persons. Take our host. I understand he's been divorced at least twice. I should say he had a wandering eye. I don't think he'd need much encouragement—certainly not as much as I've given you, Simon."

"My strength is as the strength of ten, sweetheart!"

"Salute, Sir Galahad!—You can never tell, though," she added musingly. "Perhaps Clarice would like to have you step out a little. This heavy-husband stuff may

cramp her style. It gets to be something of a bore sometimes. If you should ever want to make her jealous——"

The fact that Thorn had also invited the Munsons for the week-end had slightly dampened Clarice's exuberance at first, but she recovered when it became apparent that he had done so simply to make her feel more comfortable, and that the party was really for her.

"What do you think now, Simon?" she demanded proudly when they had gone to their rooms the first night. "Was it worth it or wasn't it?"

Simon paused in any guest's customary week-end pastime of searching for his belongings.

"Where the devil do you suppose that fathead has put my pyjamas?—What was that? Sure. They seemed like a nice lot of people at dinner."

"Nice lot of people!" Clarice's voice was shrilly scornful. "Don't you know that that was the very cream of the polo-playing set?"

"No—was it?—I didn't think so much of 'em. That blond girl I sat beside was a peach, though. She seemed to have sense."

"Ava Joyce?—She's one of the smartest women in American society. So is her sister, Esther—that's Mrs. Bruce King, you know they live right next door. I'm going to get Buckley to take me over there to-morrow afternoon. She asked us to tea. Her husband used to be a crack forward on the All-American team."

"That bleary-eyed little pot-belly?"

"I don't think he's so bad-looking."

"Hurray!" Simon triumphantly held up the missing pyjamas.—"King? I don't believe he could get his leg over a pony to-day."

"Maybe he couldn't, but he was an intimate friend of King Edward and the inner Court circle."

"O me! O my!"

"And he knew Lady Brooke well—'The Babbling Brooke'—he told me all about her at dinner, and how Albert Edward—he was Prince of Wales then—'perjured himself like a gentleman'—Didn't you like Mr. Devereaux? I thought he was perfectly fascinating. And the Maitlands! I asked Diana to let me come and see her garden—and she was delighted. I hope you made yourself agreeable to Ava Joyce? It's lucky they're all sort of connected. It will make it so much easier."

"Make what easier?"

"To be intimate with them. They'll form a wonderful nucleus."

"'Nucleus'?"

"You know what a nucleus is."

"I thought Buckley Thorn was going to be your nucleus."

"He's only a stepping-stone—like the Munsons. By the way, I wish he hadn't asked them. I don't want to have to carry her. Why don't you take her for a walk tomorrow afternoon, so that I can have Esther King to myself at tea time?"

Gladys was quite ready to leave the field to Clarice, although she was under no illusion as to her friend's tactics.

Clarice, she told Simon, amused her to death! A great artist—really! she called her. She had Devereaux and the Longwoods and Lloyd Maitland, to say nothing of Buckley Thorn and that fat little Bruce King, eating out of her hand already. "Follow her and you'll wear diamonds!" If she'd lived in the time of Louis XV she'd have made Simon constable of France. Gladys lightly intimated that she might have accomplished it in the same way as certain famous ladies.

Clarice and he returned to New York on Monday morning rather headachey and fusty after what she called the finest time in her life, and with a standing invitation from Thorn to run down over any Sunday when they had no other date. "Only we mustn't overdo it!" she commented. "We don't want to be known just merely as friends of Buckley Thorn. He hasn't any real social standing. He's really second-rate. The people down there only tolerate him because he's a rich bachelor and president of Bruce King's company. We want to stand on our own feet.—But just think what I've accomplished in three days!—Dinner and tea with the Kings! Tea with Diana Maitland! Luncheon with Ava Joyce! They're our friends now, Simon! I can call on them!—We're off! We're really off!"

She was on the verge of tears from sheer happiness. Simon could not but feel a certain happiness in hers.

"Now will you tell me what that dinner for Thorn cost?"

"One hundred and twenty-two dollars," stated Clarice—"and well worth it."

§ 6

Their subsequent social progress during the remainder of that summer was represented by another visit to Mrs. Fairchild at Ardsley, a second and then a third week-end, at wide intervals, at Buckley Thorn's, a special luncheon invitation to the King's, to attend which Clarice insisted on hiring a Packard for the day at thirty-five dollars, a Sunday at the Maitlands' and, of course, her great coup at Mr. Robinson's. They arrived for the Fourth at Greenwich, fresh from Clarice's victories at Westbury.

"Now just leave me alone, darling. I know exactly

what I'm up to and I've got to do it my own way!—Take Aunt Hannah out motoring like a good boy and give me a chance to vamp Uncle Henry."

Simon, whose head was swimming, did as he was bid. Each afternoon, with "Aunt Hannah" Robinson sitting stiffly beside him, he rode in state up and down the Boston Post Road, commenting cheerily upon the beauty and general desirability of Greenwich, the professional renown of the Honorable John Henry Robinson, the cool and delightful climate of Connecticut, and the Horse Aid Society of which she was an honorary vice-president. She adored her brother, whom she regarded as an intellectual giant and one of the great men of all time, and she took a natural interest in Simon and Clarice because he favored them with his approval.

"Anybody Henry likes I like," she assured Simon, with the smile of a Hallowe'en pumpkin. "He never likes anybody that isn't nice. He's a great reader of character, Henry is. That's one of the secrets of his wonderful success—that and his brains, of course. Did you ever notice the size of his skull between the ears? It is shaped just like Daniel Webster's. He has the same sort of brains. Henry has left his to Robinson College at Pewter, Iowa, where the family came from. It's named after him, you know. Henry didn't have a cent—he was just a poor boy, but he made up his mind that with God's help he was going to succeed, and he did. Isn't it wonderful! Now Henry is one of the best-known men in the United States. They have asked him to run for President ever so many times,—but he won't. He thinks all that is better for a younger man. Poor dear! He's entitled to his rest. It would irk him to have to shake hands with all those people. He has very quiet tastes for a man of his calibre. He likes to just sit and

think about what he has done. Have you ever seen his little book—such a beautiful little book!—in which he keeps his investments? It's only about as big as a prayer-book and it's all bound in lovely crushed morocco leather and ornamented in gold. The name of the securities is on the left-hand page, with the amount he paid for them, and on the right-hand page is what they are worth now and the amount of dividends. He loves that book! He just loves it! You see it represents so much to him.—I've seen him sit and look at it with a sweet, dreamy look on his face, that was too lovely. Isn't he just wonderful, Mr. Kent!"

Simon had no hesitation in agreeing that John Henry Robinson was wonderful, so long as he was not obligated to specify in what way.

"He thinks your wife is just too lovely, too," added Aunt Hannah. "He loves her way of calling him 'Uncle Henry.' It *is* sweet, isn't it! I hope she'll call me 'Aunt Hannah.' We have both taken a great fancy to her. She's a dear girl—so fresh and innocent. You're a lucky young man!"

Uncle Henry devoted himself so assiduously to his niece that for three days Simon saw practically nothing of Clarice. Dressed in a yellow-and-black-striped bathing-suit, in which he looked like a superannuated kewpie, Mr. Robinson spent most of the mornings with her upon the bathing-beach and disappeared with her promptly after lunch in his huge rumbling limousine. Evenings they all listened to the radio and played dominoes. At the end of the second afternoon Simon was prepared to slay Aunt Hannah with the first suitable implement that came to hand. It was lucky, he concluded, that she did not intend to leave her brains to Robinson College.

"How much longer have I got to keep this up, Clarice?

—It isn't war, it's murder!" he demanded when they went up to their rooms that evening. "I've got ossification of the cerebellum and atrophy of the coccyx from sitting beside that old girl."

"Just one more afternoon, Simon dear! I want to see if he won't make the move himself."

Clarice wore a new dress every afternoon and evening. Miss Robinson was thrilled.

"O, I do like pretty clothes!" she declared rather pathetically. "Of course I'm too old for anything like that, and when I was your age we didn't have the money. But they are so becoming! Such lovely material! It's nice you can have things like that while you're young enough to enjoy them—and so other people can enjoy them on you!"

Noticeably among these last was Uncle Henry. His attitude toward Clarice had by this time become markedly flirtatious,—"a dainty rogue in porcelain," he called her—and there were moments when Simon felt that his attentions were a bit too personal. He was always taking her by the arm, patting her on the hand or shoulder, and slipping his arm about her waist, in a purely paternal way, of course, on the slightest provocation or even without any.

"Sickening old pink ass!" Simon would mutter to himself, after the more objectionable of these demonstrations.

"O, he's just a silly old man!" she would protest. "They're all like that!"

"Why don't you make him keep his hands off you?"

"But how can I?—You don't want me to hurt his feelings, do you?"

"Sure I do, if he can't behave himself!"

"Now Simon! You'd spoil everything!—You can

trust me to hold him in his place.—Anyhow, after this visit, we won't have to waste any more time on him."

Nevertheless Simon did not like having Clarice go off for the whole afternoon in that closed car with their elderly host—in spite of his trust.

"That is a wonderful little woman of yours!" said Mr. Robinson the evening before their departure as he led Simon into the hideous "Indian Room" used for smoking. "So bright, so clever, and so charming to look at! Just the wife for an able and ambitious man like yourself. Precisely the sort I would have picked out for my own son—if I had one." He struck a match and settled himself on a purple plush ottoman. "But expensive, eh? A pretty woman costs a pretty penny! I know! I know! —But it will be money in your pocket in the long run. She'll carry you along with her, Simon. She'll get clients for you. She knows the right ones. I look for great things from you, my boy. But I hope you're not thinking of leaving us just yet."

Simon, who had not contemplated any such move in the immediate future, sensed the probability that Clarice had hinted at something of the sort.

"If I recall correctly, sir, I once heard you advise a young man not to remain too long in any firm, but to get out for himself," he answered non-committally.

"Quite true—I did!" admitted Mr. Robinson. "But that was general. I merely meant that it did not pay to remain a subordinate forever. Your position with us, Simon, is quite different. You are, I may say, a coming man in the firm. You have highly responsible work and, I may add, you do it to the Queen's taste."

"I am glad of that!" Simon temporized.

"I appreciate that times have changed and that life in New York is more expensive than in the old days. One

has appearances to keep up, particularly in the circles in which you move—the Long Island set, I mean. But the way to get money is to keep close to it."

Simon waited; nothing happened.

"I suppose every one feels that he would like an interest in the business he brings into a firm," he hazarded.

"And rightly," assented Mr. Robinson. "The amount of business a partner brings in is the true measure of his value. Brains are cheap. Personality is what is rare,—the ability to inspire confidence and liking. You have that in a marked degree, my dear fellow." He knocked his ashes into the brass tray at his side. "Well, I certainly don't want you and Clarice—you don't mind my calling her that, do you?—to be dissatisfied. During the last day or two I have been giving the question of your future remuneration some thought, and I am going to make what seems to me a generous proposition. If you stay with us I will increase your salary to one thousand dollars a month—it is ten a year now, is it not?—and you shall have in addition thirty-five per cent of all the business that you bring in—Mr. Buckley Thorn's, for instance. He had never been a client of ours until you joined us. Now since you have a personal and friendly relation to him, any fees that come from him will be divided in the proportion I have indicated. How does that strike you?"

Simon repressed an inclination to reply that he thought it more than handsome. Instead, he pondered a moment and then said deliberately:

"It is very kind of you.—I suppose the percentage is the usual one?"

"On the contrary it is unusually—large!" asserted Mr. Robinson. "You will be—provided you accept my

offer—the only one in the office on such a favorable basis.—And, of course, you will be allowed a private secretary," added his chief.

§ 7

With the advent of August their invitations began to dwindle,—their Long Island friends were scattering to Newport, Saratoga, and Bar Harbor,—and Clarice intimated that she felt the need of change. "You must admit I've earned it, Simon!" David was still with his grandmother on the New Jersey coast and, as matters would keep Simon in the city until the end of the summer, Clarice suggested that it would be nice if she could run up for a few weeks to Narragansett, where he could come over Sundays and from which point of vantage they could make flying visits to the Newport Casino and Bailey's Beach.

"But won't you be lonely up there all by yourself?" he protested.

"O, Gladys Munson is going and I'll know loads of people there!—And it's so near Newport!—I wouldn't want to try Newport itself yet—not this summer anyhow. But, if I go over for the day, I might easily run into Esther King or Ava Joyce or Diana Maitland—and if they knew I was alone, they might ask me to visit them."

"How about taking David?"

"O, he's so happy with mother! He just adores her! I don't think change is good for children. And he's so well just now!"

So Clarice went to Narragansett alone and Simon stayed in the city. He kissed her good-bye in the Pullman with an ache in his throat, and she clung to him until the train had started moving, and waved the bunch of violets

he had given her from the window until it disappeared into the tunnel. He needed nothing to tell him that love was the greatest thing in the world. Part of himself had gone with Clarice.

He returned, after a dragging day at the office, to the empty apartment and walked helplessly through the rooms, which still seemed to echo to the sound of her voice. Clarice! Clarice! He pushed away untouched the supper which Miranda had prepared. He called up Western Union and dictated a telegram in which he said that he could not live without her until next Saturday. He repeated the same thing to himself over and over again. Half of him was dead!

The dreariness of the place was insupportable.

Funny how a woman could fill your whole life! Six months ago he had not known Clarice! Now she absorbed his existence—dominating it with a restless, consuming energy. He looked around the drawing-room. There was nothing in it that had belonged to him before he knew her. The same was true of the dining-room. He took off his coat and waistcoat and unbuttoned his collar—a relief. Then he looked around for something to read. There were no books in sight and he got up and went out into the hall. The electric light shone through the door of David's bedroom and upon the white bars of his empty crib. Poor little David!

Opposite was the sixty-dollar bookcase containing his library, including the small collection belonging to his grandfather. He inspected it curiously, and selecting a half-dozen volumes dumped them on the sofa in the drawing-room. He looked for his pipe but could not find it. Clarice had not liked the smell of pipe-smoke but, now that she was not there to object—Where was the damn thing? He found it in a tin cracker-box on the

closet-shelf, and a half empty pouch of tobacco which he carried back with him. Then he went to the bedroom and dug out the old valise which still harbored his manuscript. It was a trifling job to clear the junk off the table and adjust the reading-lamp.

At ten o'clock he told Miranda to go to bed and that he would turn off the lights. At eleven-thirty he descended to the street in search of more tobacco, and, finding that he was hungry, ravaged the ice-box for the discarded supper. At three he was still hard at work—on "The History of Human Liberty." At four he found that his tobacco-pouch was empty and, searching for more, discovered that the night was nearly over.

Darkness had given place to the vague unreality of morn. From below came the faint jingle of bottles, the "g'dap" and clippity-clop of milk-wagons. Black canyons gridironed the city. The streak of light in the east momentarily grew wider and brighter. He stood, for a long time, gazing excitedly at the coming day but with no thought of sleep. It was like being in a box at the theatre and seeing the curtain go up. The dawn was bursting over the housetops, as across the footlights. The canyons became rivers of gold as the yellow flood poured over the roofs. Some unseen electrician had thrown on the switch that changed the scene from "evening" to "next day."

He fancied himself as riding high above the world, looking down upon the history of mankind. As he flew through the heavens in the fiery chariot of his imagination he saw civilization unfolding itself from the beginning. Beside him, guiding the plunging steeds, stood a female figure—but it was not that of Clarice.

He slept until eight without undressing, washed, ate ravenously of Miranda's provender, placed her under a

sacred objurgation to leave his papers and books inviolate, and departed to the office in a dream. "Colonel Bill" failed to show up and Simon seized the opportunity to ascertain what Fourier had to say about the "Contrat Social."

He telegraphed Clarice again at noon and—Myer being out of town—hurried back to the apartment at four.

By Friday afternoon he was half way through his chapter on "Rousseau" and took it along with him to Narragansett. Clarice was not particularly interested in it, and they spent the next two days swimming, loafing about the club, where she seemed to know everybody already, and playing bridge. It was a fretful and unsatisfactory week-end for Simon who, much as he loved Clarice, begrudged the hours that he might have been spending upon his book. Besides the people he met made him rather tired.

Monday night he was back again in the flat, stripped to the waist, hard at work. If only he could get a solid uninterrupted week! Or, if only he could write at Narragansett, instead of having to play that infernal bridge. In compensation he continued to work feverishly the rest of the week and sat up nearly all Thursday night. Even with Friday, Saturday, and Sunday out he would finish the chapter in another week.

Friday morning he received a night-letter telegram from his wife, dated Newport:

"Met Esther King while watching tennis tournament at Casino here and she asked me to spend week-end with her. Can probably manage to get invite for you if you want to come but suggest all things considered probably better you stay New York and come Narragansett next Friday. Oceans of love.—Clarice."

He felt no disappointment as he dictated his answer:

"Plenty work here. See you next Friday night. Have good time. Love.—Simon."

A series of daily conferences, at which Simon was to be present as counsel, had been scheduled for the following week but that afternoon Myer telegraphed that everything was off—at least for the present—as the bondholders' committee could not agree. There was now no reason why Simon should not take the vacation which was due him, beginning at once. Had Clarice been in Narragansett, he would have dutifully packed his trunk and given up his work for the next two weeks, but she was not;—moreover had she not suggested that he had better stay in New York? He had no idea how long she might stay with Esther King. Anyhow, there was no hurry. He would go on working over the week-end and see what Clarice was going to do.

Burr came into his office after lunch.

"I suppose you'll be shoving off on your vacation now that those highbinders can't get together?"

"I suppose so," answered Simon disingenuously, for already he was formulating a most disgraceful plan.

"What'll your address be?"

"Narragansett Pier—'Bay View House.'"

"I know. Same hotel the Munsons stop at.—Well, enjoy yourself."

"Thanks!—I shall, by golly!" he added as he gathered together a pile of books and sent an office-boy for a taxi. "I've got two whole days and three whole nights to myself!—And, if Clarice should stay over in Newport, I may have—who knows how many!"

He finished his first draft of "Rousseau and the Contrat Social" at one forty-five Sunday morning and instantly was seized with a crazy desire to call up Otto.

"Gosh, I'd like to see the old bean!—Mighty important that he should read it, too. But can I, after the way he talked about my marrying Clarice?—Hell, what difference does it make!"

He looked up Otto's number and dialled. After a long time he recognized his friend's voice.

"Hello. Who is it?"

"It's me!—Simon—Simon Kent. How you was, Old Ot?"

"O, hello Red! I'm all right. What the hell do you want?" He sounded suspicious.

"Nothing particular.—Say, I've finished my chapter on the 'Contrat Social.'"

"Don't say!—And did you call me up in the middle of the night to tell me that?"

"I did."

"You've got a nerve!—What's it like?"

"O, so-so.—Want me to read it to you?"

"When?"

"Anytime—now. It's only two o'clock. Why don't you come around?"

Followed an hiatus suddenly terminated by Simon's afterthought.

"My wife's gone away!" he supplemented in explanation.

"Well—" began Otto dubiously, "I might——"

"An' say, Ot! Stop in at a night-lunch on your way over and bring up a couple of hot-dogs.—An' look!—Fetch along a tooth-brush and a pair of pyjamas—I've got an extra bed and you can camp here over Sunday."

At five o'clock they were still arguing.

"You give me a pain!" shouted Simon. "What is 'a right'?"

"You make me sick!" shouted Otto. "What is 'a duty'?"

"Say—this is like the old dump in Stoughton,—isn't it?"

"You bet!"

Clarice wired that her friend Esther had asked her to stay over until Thursday. She never knew that Otto occupied her bed during the first week of Simon's vacation in New York.

CHAPTER IX

§ 1

"As regards your secretary—?" Mr. Canthus's double lenses seemed to focus in a chill void somewhere behind Simon. "What are your particular requirements? Have you any preference as to sex, for example?"

Mr. Canthus was the one man—if he was a man—in Robinson, Myer and Burr's office that Simon could not warm up to,—yet he owed his place there to Mr. Canthus. He vastly preferred the drunken Hepper, who should have been fired sixteen years ago and whose retention was an affront to the Bessemer efficiency of the ex-personnel officer of the Pennsylvania. As to a secretary, the idea bored him rather.

"I've no preference. What's the difference?" he asked from behind a pile of reports.

"Men as a rule are stronger, more intelligent, and more regular, of course; women are neater, quicker, better-mannered, more loyal, and—more personal, if you want that. A woman is cheaper."

"How much?"

"Quite a lot. Depends on what you want her to do."

"All I want is somebody to keep the place shipshape, take telephone messages, attend to the less important correspondence, and run my files. Ought to be easy. Anybody will do."

"Suppose I try to find you a good girl? They're apt to be better on the 'phone."

"Fine," agreed Simon. "And please tell her not to be personal."

"Sometimes you can't prevent it," said Mr. Canthus. And then, becoming human for the first time since he had known Simon, he added coldly: "In which case they're the devil!"

§ 2

Clarice had managed, in the end, to have quite a little season in Newport, in addition to a very pleasant six weeks at Narragansett Pier, with the result that Simon, who had been able to devote his evenings uninterruptedly to his writing, was in full swing when she returned in September.

"Why, Simon! The place looks like a newspaper office! You really must move your things somewhere else. Can't you, dear? People will be dropping in for tea, you know——"

"Couldn't I keep them all on a single table over there by the window?"

She made a deprecating gesture.

"It will spoil the looks of the whole room. Still—if you really need to— Of course I don't want to interfere with anything important, but this writing of yours isn't going to get you clients. It's much more apt to interfere with your work for the firm."

"My duties there usually end at five o'clock."

"Well, put your papers anywhere you wish. It's nothing to me personally. I've tried for your sake to keep our apartment looking a little neat. What would Ava and Diana think if they came in here and found it full of dirty old pipes and things?"

"Who are they—'The Duncan Sisters'?"

She was shocked.

"Ava Joyce and Diana Maitland, of course!"

"O yes, I forgot!"

She did not notice the sarcasm in his tone, but he missed neither the new and shriller note in hers nor her omission—until the lapse of a full half-hour—to inquire as to David's health and progress. That he had been able to endure his separation from Clarice puzzled him. His passion for her at times was as intense as ever, only now there were comparatively long stretches when her presence did not arouse it. He was even conscious of being a little irritated at her unreasonableness—about the drawing-room, for instance. Who cared—really? Nevertheless he did not wish to make an issue of it. The apartment was her sphere. There was plenty of room in his office now,—and he moved his books down-town the next day, not without a feeling of resentment, due less to her lack of consideration for himself than to her indifference to his work. It was as if she were utterly disregardful of some one he loved,—a child of theirs, for instance. She was the same way about David. She seemed hardly conscious of his existence. Her life was completely taken up with her new friends and the friends of her friends, whom she ultimately hoped to make her own. She had a mental chart of the whole of New York society and had already carefully plotted her course to the Golden Indies of her ambitions.

"It would be better to know more people one's own age, of course. In order to get right in to the inner-inner circle you have to be 'inti' with your contemporaries. One can know everybody and go to all the big things and still never really arrive."

"What do you call 'really arriving'?"

"Why, being seen everywhere with the nicest people —like Ava Joyce."

"I thought you were 'inti,' as you call it, with her."

"Oh, I'm making progress. But she's too old for me. She's thirty-seven. If I went around too much with her, people would think I was just making up to her for what I could get out of it. I ought to know younger girls,—Vira Bradley and that crowd. They're the ones in the limelight. If I were seen with them everybody would know they must like me, for otherwise they wouldn't bother."

"But don't those girls ever stop going out?"

"Stop going? O you Simple Simon! They just go on forever! They don't do anything else."

"So unless we know the 'inner-inner circle,' you'll feel that we haven't made the grade?"

"Not exactly that,—only we shan't have got where I hope to get,—for the sake of your future, Simon darling."

His heart sank. Did he want success at any such price?

"I get you," he said thoughtfully. "And yet I suppose a man could live in an atmosphere of success all his life and never accomplish a single thing that he really wanted to do!"

Was that to be his own fate? Was he to go on and on, trying cases that would attract greater and greater attention, advising financial freebooters, drafting corporate mortgages, making more and more money, and—never satisfying his real love for the law in its broader sense? But his doubts always fled when he was in Clarice's arms. She loved him harder than ever. Sometimes it worried him a little.

§ 3

The young woman who was waiting in his office stood up when he entered. It was too early for clients and,

besides, he did not receive them save by appointment. Her back was to the light. She was as tall as Clarice but slenderer, younger-looking.

"Good morning," he said, taking off his overcoat. "Do you want to see me?"

"Aren't you Mr. Simon Kent?"

"I'm the man!"

"Don't you recognize me?"

He came closer. She erased the smile and looked back at him gravely. A solemn little girl had once gazed at him in just that way. "Green days in forests, blue days at sea."

"By George! Is it Vira—grown up—a little?"

The smile broke out again and she nodded with a characteristic jerk of her small bobbed head.

"Looking for a secretary? Well, that's a foolish question! If you weren't they wouldn't have sent me in here."

"Who?"

"The people out there. A man called Canthus. I came with a card from the agency, and he gave me the once-over and said one of the partners needed a private secretary. I'd no idea you were the one. I do hope I'll suit! How have you been all these years, Simon? You're looking grand! What are the hours? Do I have to take law dictation?"

"Hold on!" begged Simon. "Give me a chance! You really don't want a job in a law office, do you?"

"Oh, yes. I took the full secretarial course at Burnham's Business School last winter, four hours every morning for three months. I can typewrite pretty well, but as a stenographer I'm punk—poor, I mean. Still I was as good as the average up there, although I can't say they were much!"

"But aren't you what the newspapers call a 'society girl'?"

"I 'came out' like all the other girls of my age. There's nothing in what they call 'society' after the first winter."

He recalled Clarice's remarks upon the subject.

"I thought girls who 'came out' just went on having a good time forever."

"If they're satisfied with it."

"Aren't you?"

"Oh, it's all right enough. A girl has to grow up sometime. Of course I could have opened a shop or gone into interior decorating, but I couldn't learn anything of real life that way. I'd have been thrown in contact only with people like myself. I didn't want that."

"But didn't you take a chance when you just handed your name to an agency?"

"Perhaps. Of course Uncle Isaac would have taken me into his office, but I didn't like to sponge on him. Anyhow, I wanted to be independent. I ought to be able to take care of myself at my age. I'm twenty now! And I felt I could make myself useful in a law office."

Simon decided that the presence of a few more like her in such offices would add to the pleasure of legal practice. He had not appreciated before how deep an impression those summers on the Maine coast had made upon him. It was Vira and more than Vira. The little girl, so reserved and contemplative, had become a self-assured young woman with an extraordinary capacity for rapid-fire speech, and a mind very much her own.

"Well, that's fine!" he said heartily. "When do you want to start?"

"Oh, now. But aren't you going to ask me what I can do?"

"No," said Simon. "I don't care a hang!"

"Would you like me to answer the telephone for you?"

"That would be great."

The disorder upon his desk cried out to heaven.

"You might go over that mail." His eye travelled to the table in the corner. "And when you get through with that, you could straighten out that stuff over there,—that is, if you can read my writing,—put the pages together and number 'em so they won't get lost. You'll find a lot of loose notes mixed in with the mess. I might need them sometime. If you could sort them——"

"Why not start a file and run a cross-index system?"

"I used to, but I gave it up. It's around here somewhere. There it is, under the pile on the floor!"

Vira examined a couple of yellow sheets.

"I can read your writing all right." Her face brightened. "Why, isn't this the manuscript of your book on 'Liberty'? The one Otto is always talking about?"

"Do you know Otto?"

"Of course I know him. He's Uncle Isaac's right-hand man."

"He's a great old 'Ot'!"

"He's a perfect dear!" she agreed heartily.

"How's your mother?"

"Fine—for her. She'll be delighted to learn I'm working for you. We were abroad together for nearly three years."

"And Garry?"

"Grand! He's in his first year at the Harvard Law School."

The same thought came to both of them and conscious of it they grinned at each other across the room.

A card from Mr. Canthus lay on his blotter. It read:

"Bradley, Vira—American—20—Sec. Course,
Burnham's Bus. Sch.—neat—nervous—rather

abrupt—possibly too independent—a lady—lives with widowed mother—no experience, but promising."

Simon, smiling, stuffed it in his pocket.

The morning passed in what was, for Simon, a hitherto unknown calm, broken only by occasional catspaws of questions which somehow he welcomed. He forgot that he had a telephone, and just before her lunch-hour Vira came in with a neat batch of ready-typed letters, which he was, astonishing to say, able to sign as written. He debated with himself the desirability of asking her out to lunch and ruled against it. She was a good kid and there was no sense in spoiling her.

"What hour do you want to go to lunch?" he inquired as he affixed his last signature.

"Any time. I'll wait and go when you go. Then I'll always be here if you should need me."

He was unexpectedly called to the Appellate Division and, having been detained there until after four, found on his return that Vira had already resurrected the file, arranged his books, and was now at work typing his manuscript.

"I'll have a hard time keeping up with you at that rate!" he remarked as he watched her fingers.

She lifted her eyes without stopping.

"But don't you write all the time? Otto said you were always working at the Public Library."

"Oh, no! Only when I get a chance."

She looked disappointed.

"Otto said you were just 'eating it up'!—Human alligator effect!"

"I was—during the summer—when there was nothing much doing."

"Uncle Isaac says you're a remarkable man."

"I've heard he was a good judge."

She threw back the machine at the bell.

"He is! Anyhow, I'm proud to be working for you,—sir."

He was on the point of protesting the word but checked himself. She had not meant to be provocative or facetious, but in an unstilted way to evidence her actual respect for him. He'd try to show her that it was not misplaced. Really he ought to work more consistently on his book. Wouldn't Clarice be astonished when she found out that the girl she was always holding up to him as an example of the ultra-smart was down-town working in a law office! There really was nothing smart about Vira at all! He tried to imagine Clarice in a law office and gave it up. Who would ever have imagined that the solemn little Vira, with her three dogs, would have grown up into such a mature young lady in only six years!

He paused on his way out.

"By the way, what's become of your old collie 'White Chief,' and 'Pat' the airedale, and that fluffy little 'Toby'?"

"They're all alive. They spend their winters at Northeast Harbor."

"Well, I'm glad you've still got 'em! Do you remember how you used to say to me, 'And then what? Tell me some more'?"

A suggestion of pink came into her cheeks as she jerked her head again.

"I remember. But you never would! Maybe you will now?"

"Maybe," he said, looking over his shoulder at her through the door.

§ 4

He reached the apartment after his first day of tranquillity to find Clarice having a brain-storm over what she stigmatized as an insult. She had applied to have their names inserted in the "Social Register" and, instead of sending her the usual blank to be filled out, the manager had notified her that it would be necessary for them to be proposed, seconded, and indorsed, as for membership in a club. She was the more furious since, confident that once the manager should see her all would be well, she had taken a taxi to his office and confronted that gentleman—only to have the same statement politely but firmly repeated. She had controlled her indignation for the moment, but it was now being vented on the world at large, including Simon.

"Did you ever hear of such a nerve! He knows perfectly well who we are! All my family are in it,—that is, the ones who live in New York."

"What difference does it make whether we're in it or not?"

"People won't even know where we live."

"They can look in the telephone-book!"

"If we're not in it, people will think we can't *get* in."

"I don't believe they'll think anything about it. There are nearly five million people in New York. I'd as soon belong to the four million nine hundred and ninety thousand who aren't in it as to the ten thousand that are."

Clarice looked at him wearily.

"I sometimes wonder if all the effort is worth making."

"I'll tell you right now, dearie,—it isn't!"

The green tints in her eyes were predominant as she replied:

"Don't you see what a reflection it is on us,—on me?"

"Can't say I do. Who gives a damn?"

"Everybody."

"Hell!"

"I won't be talked to in that way!"

"What way?"

"'Oh, hell!'"

"You say it often enough yourself!"

She threw herself face down on the sofa sobbing, her toes beating a tattoo.

"I won't be treated so! I won't! I won't! After such a lovely summer and everybody being so nice to me—to come back here——"

"Clarice!"

"Leave me alone!"

He waited until the paroxysm had passed. Then he put his arm about her.

"I'm sorry, darling. I didn't mean to be unkind."

She allowed him to comfort her.

"It's all for your sake, dear," she reminded him.

Owing to the evening's excitement Simon forgot to mention the name of his new secretary or even that he had one.

§ 5

He heard no more from Clarice about the "Social Register." She had adverted to it once upon the day following, for the purpose of clarifying her position, and thereafter had held her peace.

"I'm not going to humiliate myself with that little whipper-snapper down there!" she asserted scornfully. "If he doesn't know who we are, I certainly am not going to demean myself by entering into an argument with

him about it. You're quite right, Simon! We don't have to be in the 'Social Register.' Our being out of it can't affect our position, one way or another. Imagine being asked to furnish letters of recommendation, as if you were a servant! It's a scream!"

Clarice's outburst, although followed by the customary passionate reconciliation, was unfortunate in coming at the beginning of the resumption of their regular life together. While neither of them had said much, their words had had a bitter ring; and it was perhaps a desire to take away the recollection of their sting that led Clarice next day to visit the office, with the purpose of giving Simon a surprise. He would see how interested she was in his work, and could take her out to lunch, and maybe introduce her to some nice men!

Simon was not in his office at the moment of her arrival and, to her annoyance, she observed that the young woman who asked her to be seated was very pretty. It was astonishing how these girls had learned to get themselves up! This one's hair, for instance. It looked as if it had been done by the most expensive of Parisian coiffeurs. Very likely she spent all her salary on her person,—more than her salary, maybe! Clarice took an instant dislike to her. She seemed entirely too much at home,—too assured,—too possessive! Why hadn't Simon told her that he had a female secretary?

The girl stopped her typing and asked:

"Won't you have something to read while you wait?"

Clarice hardly noticed her.

"No, thank you!"

She wondered how long the girl had been there. She must know Simon intimately by this time. Why *hadn't* he ever mentioned her? Very likely she was in love with him! Those girls were always trying to vamp their em-

ployers. She must look into this. Simon had probably been taking her out with him all summer.

The door opened and Simon entered.

"Why, hello, Clarice!" he cried, not altogether elated at the prospect of having to invite her to lunch, since he had already made an engagement. Then recalling Clarice's eagerness to meet Vira he added jovially: "Well, I hope you two have made friends!"

Clarice compressed her lips.

"I haven't found it necessary," she remarked icily. "I merely dropped in to see if I could lunch with you."

Simon's grin only irritated Clarice the more.

"Can we go now?"

"You don't understand, Clarice. This is Vira Bradley. She's my new secretary. You've been wanting to meet her for ever so long!"

"Vira Bradley! Your *secretary!*"

So she had made a fine fool of herself!

"Sure. Miss Bradley, 'meet the wife'!"

Clarice had reddened with mortification, but she pulled herself together and at once started out to retrieve her mistake and capitalize her opportunity.

"How do you do!" she exclaimed, extending her hand in her most winning manner. "I suspected from her appearance that Miss Bradley was not what she seemed!"

Vira left the machine and shook hands.

"I guessed you were Mrs. Kent," she said. "But I am what I seem! That is, if I seem like a private secretary."

"Such a lovely dress you have on—it's perfectly cut!"

"Not so bad for a working girl—fourteen-ninety-nine!"

"Well, I'm delighted to meet you after all these

years! My cousin Muriel is always talking about you! She admires you tremendously, you know!"

Simon could not help wondering when it was that Muriel had been talking about Vira, but Clarice was entirely herself again.

"Well, how about going out to lunch? You *must* join us, Miss Bradley! I want you to tell me how my husband behaves when I can't see him. *Do* come!"

She saw Vira glance at Simon.

"Won't you join us?" he remarked without enthusiasm.

"I'm afraid I ought to stay here to answer the telephone," said Vira. "You'll forgive me, won't you?"

"Oh, but you *must* come, my dear!" insisted Clarice. "Make her come, Simon! We'll hop in the subway and slip up to the Ritz——"

"I can't do that, Clarice. I can't take the time off. I'll have to break an engagement, as it is. Of course, if Miss Bradley would like to come with us, it will be fine."

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I can't." Vira was polite but firm.

"I can't make Miss Bradley come with us if she doesn't think she ought to!" expostulated Simon. "It will have to be a pretty quick lunch at that. I can't spare more than half an hour."

"So much the better! Miss Bradley can certainly spare twenty minutes. She's got to eat somewhere and it might as well be with us. We'll go somewhere near. Come along, everybody!"

It was obvious that Clarice would not be gainsaid. Again Vira looked at Simon. This time Clarice caught an infinitesimal movement of his shoulders. Vira turned to her.

"It's very kind of you. I'll come with pleasure."

She was ready in a jiffy.

"Now don't scrimp on the lunch, Simon!" whispered his wife while Vira was putting on her hat. "Be sure and take us to a good place!"

They were shoved and squeezed in the elevator and Clarice made it evident that, as a lady, she was used to a much greater degree of consideration.

"I should think you'd find this sort of thing most unpleasant!" she panted.

"Oh, it's rather fun!" answered Vira. "They don't mean to trample on you, but they can't help it. Somebody is stepping on their feet, too!"

"How about Childs's?" suggested Simon as they were swept out onto the sidewalk. Clarice poked him.

"It's so crowded! I hate those rabbly places! Isn't there some nice quiet place where we can get something really good to eat?"

"I'm very apt to eat at Childs's," said Vira. "The food is good and fairly cheap. And if you're in a hurry you can wait on yourself."

"Isn't there a real restaurant somewhere near?" Clarice stood stock still.

"There's the Savarin. It's even more crowded."

"We can have more variety. Let's go there."

Simon piloted them up a runway of marble, glass, and bronze to the artificially lighted dining-room reserved for ladies, where Clarice at once usurped the functions of hostess.

"I know what *I* want!" she declared, taking the menu from Simon, as they drew up their chairs. "I want a honey-dew melon and pot au feu and crab meat à la Newburg, and a Romaine salad with those tiny little dwarf tomatoes, and cream cheese and Bar-le-duc

jelly, and then—don't you think an ice would be nice, Miss Bradley?—and coffee."

"Oh, dear! I couldn't eat all that!" protested Vira.

"Order anything you like. Would you prefer a Long Island duckling?"

"If I may have exactly what I want——"

"You surely may!"

"Then I'll just take what I always have—a bowl of 'half-and-half'—milk and cream—and a baked apple. 'The business woman's lunch'."

"I'll have the same!" said Simon. "A heavy meal always makes me stuffy."

It seemed a bit cruel, but Clarice had brought it upon herself.

With the ground thus cut from under her, his wife ordered duckling, lemon-ice, and "*un café noir.*"

"Amusing, isn't it, how we Americans say '*demi-tasse*'—a word we have invented and which no Continental understands? You ask for a '*demi-tasse*' in France or Italy and like as not the waiter will bring you a *boc.* I suppose you spend half your time abroad, don't you, Miss Bradley?"

Clarice opened her vanity bag and offered her cigarette-case to Vira, who smiled and shook her head.

"Thanks—I don't smoke."

"Don't smoke?"

"I don't like it."

"But the women all smoke abroad. I should think you'd have picked it up over there."

"I was studying. I didn't go out much. None of the girls I knew were allowed to smoke."

"Don't you adore Paris?" Clarice yearned at her. "All those wonderful cosey little restaurants and cabarets—like Zelli's and the Caveau Caucasien."

"I suppose I'd have liked them, only I never got a chance. We knew very few people there. I worked about ten hours a day and at night I was glad enough to go to bed. I loved the Louvre, though. I used to go there several times a week."

"Yes, it's too wonderful—that marvellous 'Mona Lisa'! I suppose you met a lot of the old *noblesse*—the ones who live in the Faubourg? Did you run across the Vicomte Leverrier—he's such a dear!—or the old Marquis de Singe?"

Vira had not met them, or anybody else worth knowing, apparently, but Clarice, undaunted, returned to the charge with fanfares.

"I'm so glad to have met one of you younger girls!" she confided to her. "After all, I'm only a couple of years older than you are, and most of Simon's friends are antique. Half of those I see most of have one foot in the grave,—dowagers like Esther King and that older crowd,—I've just been staying with her at Newport. You never saw such lunch parties of cackling old women! Even the ones I like best,—Diana Maitland, for instance, —are years older. I hope we'll see something of each other now we've met. You must come up to dinner soon, —only I can't offer you any young men your own age because I don't know any. I should have to ask older ones like Larry Devereaux or Dick Darcy or one of my Hungerford cousins. But perhaps you could stand being with just old folks for one night! We can take in one of the new plays and go somewhere afterwards to dance. Have you seen the new Club Anatole?"

"It's very kind of you," said Vira, "and sounds like great fun." She looked at her wrist-watch in its leather strap. "I'm sorry, but I've got to hurry back to the office. It was sweet of you to ask me out to lunch!

Oh, don't get up! And please don't bother to come to the door with me, Mr. Kent. Thank you so much!"

She was gone. Simon resumed his chair.

"Well!" he remarked laconically. "Hope you're satisfied!"

Clarice eyed him, through narrowed lids, across her "*café noir*."

"Why didn't you back me up about the lunch?"

"I didn't want anything else. There's no use trying to cram food down people's throats. You know the old adage about being able to lead a horse to water but not being able to make him drink."

"I certainly got no help from you. You acted as if you didn't want her to come at all."

"I didn't."

"And why not, may I ask?" Her eyes were mere slits.

"In the first place, I'm not keen on putting our relations on a social basis. She's down here to work, and I don't like the idea of an employer lunching with his secretary. It doesn't look well. Thirdly and lastly, it was perfectly clear she didn't want to come."

"It certainly was! And, because you sided with her against me, your little Vira took advantage of it to come down on me like a ton of brick."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't you see how she sat on me?"

"I thought she was very polite."

"Preserve me from that sort of politeness! Well, she certainly put me in my place! And it was you who gave her the chance!"

"I didn't notice anything that wasn't sweet and kind!" Was Clarice deliberately trying to quarrel with him?

Clarice gave a laugh that was like the breaking of something fragile.

"Sweet and kind! Didn't you get on to the snooty way she cut me off about everything? 'I don't smoke'! 'I don't dance'! 'I don't like going out at night'! 'I don't know anybody'! 'I'm just a hard-working little orphan che-ild'! 'And now I've got to run right back to my little office'! She made me sick!"

Simon laid down his cigarette.

"Don't be nasty, Clarice! You're absolutely unfair. It was your own fault. You dragged her over here against her will and tried to make a social occasion out of it. Naturally she didn't jump down your throat."

"I'll say she didn't! What was the real reason you didn't want her to come to lunch?"

"I've told you already."

"Perhaps it's the same reason you didn't tell me she was your secretary!"

"This is only her second day. I didn't tell you last night because you made such an infernal fuss, about that fellow who runs the 'Social Register,' that you drove it out of my mind. I'd have told you to-night."

Clarice smiled significantly.

"Who knows! It might have been driven out of your mind again! How long is it since you have seen her, before that?"

"Six years! What on earth are you driving at, Clarice?"

"How did she happen to land in Robinson, Myer & Burr?"

"The merest chance."

"I see! 'The long arm of coincidence'!"

"If you choose! She was as much surprised as I was."

"Simon, I believe you're a gaby!"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that the girl is in love with you. Anybody could see it! That's why she got a job in your office. And—" she was white with fury by this time—"that's why you didn't want me to meet her or to know her after I did meet her!"

"Do you imply that I'm in love with her?"

"Without knowing it, perhaps."

The accusation was so utterly improbable that Simon wanted to laugh.

"Clarice, you must be crazy! How could I be in love with her if I haven't seen her?"

"Do you mean to tell me you didn't see her at any time while I was away?"

"I do. Never laid eyes on her. Never thought of her existence. Listen, Clarice! I don't know what's the matter with you, but you're certainly not yourself. I don't know what all this towse is about. You asked Miss Bradley to lunch and when she came, just because she didn't admit knowing the entire peerage and drinking champagne cocktails before breakfast, you get sore at her! She's a nice girl, but she's nothing whatever in my life. Probably you're tired from having just come back to the city. There's nothing to be jealous about. For heaven's sake, don't let's quarrel about nothing!"

Clarice scrunched out her cigarette. As she got up no less than three waiters sprang to her assistance. She smiled again.

"I'm not jealous, silly. And we haven't quarrelled. I suppose I did frighten Vira. The fact that I'm several years older and that she's your employee does confuse things a little, but it's a wonderful opportunity. We must have her up to the house. All I want is to get her there just once. I don't see how she can refuse, do you?

Through her I can get to know all the younger set and maybe she'll put me up for the 'Junior League.'"

Clarice was astute enough to make no immediate effort in Vira's direction, although the latter's name was constantly upon her tongue. But she took full advantage of all the other social opportunities afforded by her new friends. Through Esther King she made the acquaintance of the Rev. Roderick Thrum, the gallant rector of St. Timothy's Church on upper Fifth Avenue, and joined his Altar Society, while her offer to assist Ava Joyce in her work at the Community House was gratefully accepted.

"If we join any church it ought to be St. Timothy's," she told Simon. "All the really smart people go there, when they go at all. Grace Church is just respectable and old fogy."

Simon, however, consistently refused to join any church, and in the end Clarice reluctantly abandoned any attempt to make him. Yet, paradoxically enough, it was Simon who insisted that David should be sent to Sunday-school. Clarice's indifference to the child was a constant worry to him. She seemed to take the position that, since it was he and not she who had wanted him to be with them, it was up to Simon to look after him.

David, who had had a birthday during the summer, was now as sturdy as most little boys of seven, and was making an excellent record at the University School. Simon thought he ought to have music lessons, but, although they had a piano which they had bought on the instalment plan, Clarice discouraged the idea, on the ground of the noise. David and he still kept up their walks across the park and, whenever he could, Simon tried to get in half an hour's reading aloud before the boy went to bed, but he was frequently detained at the

office until late, and sometimes throughout the entire evening. On such occasions he was apt to find that Clarice had called upon Buckley Thorn or Davis Pettibone to relieve her loneliness. They were not her only admirers, but they were the most constant, one or the other being always in attendance.

There was no question as to Clarice's popularity with the opposite sex. A stream of men flowed through the apartment during the twilight hour and the sound of the cocktail was heard in that land. Her passion for Simon never seemed to diminish, nor her love to waver, yet he saw less of her than did several of her men friends whose professional duties were less engrossing. He passed the nights with her, and dined in her company about half the time, and that was all. So far as he could make out she spent her life telephoning, lunching at restaurants, going to the theatre or the movies, and running a private bar from five to seven. He confessed that the life seemed to agree with her. He had all the pride in her smouldering loveliness, her distinction and brains, that he had ever had, yet save for his being her lawful lover they no longer had anything in common,—not even David. The child, by tacit consent, had become his, and it helped fill the void left by the diversity of their interests.

Simon was not quite conscious of that diversity and, even had he been, it is doubtful whether he would have taken it very seriously, in view of the continuing strength of their affections. He realized, of course, that Clarice was ambitious socially, rather unscrupulous, and occasionally bad-tempered; but he regarded these as superficialities. He still believed the real Clarice to be frank, generous, fundamentally honest. If he ever weakened in this conception of her, which was seldom, he invariably accused himself of ingratitude for so much as suspecting her

essential loyalty. Her ambition—was it not for him? Her trifling subterfuges and prevarications—were they not lighter than the social atmosphere in which they came to being? Her temper—was it anything more than an index of the warmth of her nature? And so far as her love was concerned, had he not the best evidence that it belonged to him? Except for the one incident about his books, no wife—or mistress—could have been more assiduous to make her husband—or her lover—comfortable and happy.

But if Clarice made Simon comfortable at home, Vira soon made him equally so at the office. Before Christmas she had become indispensable to him. She was so utterly different from Clarice that he never thought of contrasting them. Why should he? Clarice was a woman; Vira, for all her capacity, only a child. He knew her almost as well as he knew Clarice—better in some ways. Hadn't he sailed her around, day after day, at Northeast Harbor, in their old sloop, the *Cyrrus*, up Somes's Sound, across to Cranberry Island, and out through the "Western Way" to Gotts and Placentia—spent whole months with her? Hadn't he known every thought in her head, just as well as he knew her three dogs? He could hear the drum-fire of her machine through the closed door. Clarice had been a goose to make that crack about Vira's falling for him!

"Look here, Vira!" he said when she came into his office one morning. "No use your being so formal, unless you feel you have to be. You don't mind my calling you 'Vira,' do you?"

"No, indeed!"

"And of course you must call me 'Simon.'"

She gave him one of those gravely inquiring looks.

"Oh, I don't think I ought to do that! Do you?"

"If you think of me that way."

She flushed quickly.

"I only mean—what's the natural thing?" he explained hastily. "You always did call me 'Simon.' It seems sort of foolish to pretend we don't know each other that way, when we do. That is, if you want to."

"I do want to. It's only the office. Ought a 'stenog' to call her boss by his first name?"

"Up to him, isn't it?"

It ended by his calling her 'Vira' and her not calling him anything, for the time being.

She was always there ahead of him and he invariably found his mail lying on his desk, with the envelopes neatly slit, the chaff separated from the wheat. She reduced his telephoning to a minimum, protecting him from even the most ingenious of inquirers. She was no respecter of persons. "Old college friends" and ladies whose names, they assured her, Mr. Kent would "instantly recognize," had no standing with her.

With steel-like courtesy and often with a brusqueness of which he himself would not have been guilty, she kept the sanctity of Simon's privacy inviolate. And she was marvellous with Clarice!

"That 'stenog' of yours is some girl!" adjudged the perspicacious Mr. Hepper. "You better not let old Robinson get sight of her. He'd snitch her off you!"

In January Clarice said to Simon:

"Do you get much work out of Vira Bradley these days?"

"Of course! Why not?"

"Was she down there to-day?"

"Sure. She was there when I got there. And I left before she did."

"I'd like to know how she does it! I've seen her name

in the paper as being at four dances this week! And Diana Maitland told me at lunch to-day that Vira danced at the Oakman's until six o'clock this morning. They had breakfast at Childs's together."

"At Childs's? You surprise me!"

"Yes. I find it's quite fashionable now."

"Well, she didn't show any signs of weakness!" declared Simon. "She always was a strong kid."

"Why do you always speak of her as a 'kid'? She's no more of a 'kid' than I am!"

"I always think of her that way. How old is she—twenty, isn't it?"

"I'm only twenty-four."

"Well, you're different." He left the difference a matter of speculation. What it was, he probably did not know himself. Clarice turned the pages of her engagement-book.

"I think we might have that party for her now, don't you?"

"What party?"

"The one I asked her to that day we lunched together, way back in October. She seemed to like the idea."

"I don't remember anything about a party."

The thought of Clarice availing herself of Vira's connection with him at the office was now more distasteful than ever.

"Seems to me I wouldn't," he went on. "What makes you think she'd want to come?"

"She'd have to—or appear rude."

"I don't approve of forcing people."

"Why not? She's an old friend of yours. She must like you or she wouldn't work for you. Besides, she sent you an invitation to her party last year. She ought to have been to call long ago."

He was on the verge of pointing out that, obviously, if Vira had wanted to see anything of them she would have done so, but refrained. It seemed significant that Vira had never once spoken of Clarice to him. She was Judge Furman's niece, and both he and Otto must know that she was acting as his secretary. His marriage had certainly been discussed between them. If Vira hadn't called, it was because she had heard something about Clarice that she didn't like. Yet it would be cruel to tell Clarice so.

"I think things like that ought to be left to take care of themselves."

"That's where you're all wrong!" she snapped. "They don't take care of themselves. One has to take advantage of one's opportunities. Look where we are to-day! And just because I had that party for Buckley Thorn. Now I'm going to have another for Vira."

"Don't call her 'Vira'!" he almost said.

"Do as you like. You know how I feel about it!"

Clarice was already running over her dates.

"I'll ask her a month ahead, so she won't have any excuse for not coming," she said. "And I'll make it on a Monday—an off day. Shall I say dinner at Pierre's and a play afterward?"

"As you please!"

"Don't be a bear, Simon!" She pulled down his face and kissed him.

"Don't you love me any more?"

He turned away.

"That's the trouble!"

"What's the trouble?"

"If I didn't, it wouldn't matter!"

"What wouldn't matter?"

"Oh—*everything!*"

CHAPTER X

§ 1

In spite of thirty days' notice, Vira declined Clarice's invitation on the ground of another engagement, but without specifying its nature.

"I'd like to know what sort of an engagement she could have a month off! She might just as well have said she didn't want to come and be done with it!" declared Clarice. "But if she thinks she can snub me, she'll find herself jolly well mistaken!"

"You've no reason to think that she's trying to snub you!" argued Simon. "Others can ask her a month ahead as well as you can."

"They wouldn't, though! Anyhow, if she'd really had an engagement she ought to have told what it was."

But whatever Clarice's real feelings may have been toward Vira, she effectually concealed them, for when Thorn came in, fifteen minutes later, she spoke of her familiarly and in enthusiastic terms. Simon found himself resenting equally her imputation of disingenuousness and her praise. Clarice perceived and made him pay for it.

"Do you think it's safe for me, Buckley, to let Simon have such a pretty girl as Vira Bradley in his office? How do I know he's working when he stays down there so late? Don't you think I ought to do something about it?"

She managed to convey the impression that what was fair for the gander would be fair for the goose also. What she did about it was to spend most of her time in the munificent company of Buckley Thorn. He had entirely

superseded Davis, who had temporarily disappeared. Simon rarely came home from the office without finding the copper magnate there—his big bulk flung across the sofa, a cigar tilted upward from the corner of his mouth and a highball at his elbow—taking his ease.

"Seems to me Thorn is here an awful lot!" he expostulated, toward the end of February. "You'd think he owned the place. Why doesn't he get his drinks somewhere else?"

"I suppose he likes the gin he sent us. You remember the case I won from him on the Benny Leonard fight? He's all right—a little *gauche*, but perfectly harmless. Before I get through with him he's going to make you counsel to the Zonamex!" she prophesied.

At the office they were now piling work on Simon to such an extent that, on such evenings as he could get away at all, he reached the house barely in time to dress for dinner. Usually the taxi was already waiting at the door. They rarely dined at home and never by themselves. They dined on the West Side and the East Side, both up and down town, in private houses, hotels, apartments, and once in the pent-house on top of an office building; they dined with many rich and vulgar people of divers nationalities, including the American, and they dined with less rich and vulgar people, some of whom were Jews and some of whom belonged to the oldest Knickerbocker families; but, with whomsoever they dined, Simon found the conversation, food, and drink identical. When they did not play bridge they went to the theatre and afterwards somewhere to dance. He had already met a few of these people, had heard of a few more, but most of them were utter strangers to him. Yet they all treated Simon with raucous friendliness. He had no idea where Clarice picked them up, and, save

for a select few, she did not mention their names to him again.

"We might as well try everything once!" she would say. "We don't have to return their invitations unless we want to keep on with them. You can never tell where you'll meet worth-while people, though—sometimes you find 'em in the strangest places! Do you remember dining with the Allerbys in that funny little house, way over near the East River? The place they only gave us ice-water? I met Mrs. Rynall there! Could you imagine it?"

"Who's Mrs. Rynall?"

"You must have heard of Mrs. Rynall! She's the wife of the president of the Mustardseed National Bank—the one who has the private motor-bus with a kitchen and a card-room. She took twelve people in it to the Harvard-Yale game at New Haven and they had a perfectly delicious lunch and played bridge all the way up and back. Diana and Lloyd Maitland went. Mrs. Rynall was the very last person in the world you'd expect to meet at a psalm-singing Baptist dinner-party, but we had no engagement that night—and look how my virtue was rewarded! There was Mrs. Rynall! She'd gone to school with Cora Allerby—but how was I to know that? And she asked me to call on her!"

"I hope to God she won't ask us to dine with her!" groaned Simon. "I could live on my hump for the rest of the winter. Why not cut out dining more than a couple of times a week?"

§ 2

The strain of overwork and late hours was beginning to tell both in Simon's face and on his temper. Although

he was never in bed before one o'clock, he made a point of reaching the office at nine. He no longer made a pretense of reading to David in the evenings. Instead, he made a dicker with Clarice whereby he was to be free on Saturday afternoons to take the boy to the park. In return she was to do anything she chose, and what she chose was, in most instances, to lunch at a restaurant with Buckley Thorn, or some other of her many beaux, and afterward go to a matinée.

David had been growing steadily throughout the year and his head was no longer too big for his body. At home he was almost too much subdued, but once at large, he exhibited a gift for conversation that astounded Simon, who could not make out where the child picked up the bits of information he so unconcernedly tossed off.

Their Saturday afternoon excursion became a regular institution to which both he and David looked forward impatiently throughout the week. Clarice had at first adventured perfunctorily on one or two of these, but having endured the agony of the trip on the crowded steamboat in order to climb laboriously into Liberty's little finger, and having, the following week, inhaled the odors of raw meat and musty fur in the steam-heated atmosphere of the Bronx Zoo, she gave it up in disgust. Going around in subways and street-cars with a lot of dirty people invariably exhausted her and gave her a headache, she said. If the child had to be taken, there was no use in two of them wearing themselves out over it. Simon, who took no pleasure in her apathetic and grudging companionship—she was always in a hurry to get home—accepted her defection with relief.

Every Saturday Miranda now brought David to the office for lunch, after which Simon and he would wander forth through narrow streets smelling mysteriously of

coffee, bananas, or Eastern spices. Hand in hand on the crowded water-front, they watched the ferry-boats shooting to and fro like beetles, craned their necks to read the names on the overhanging prows of the Caribbean liners that towered above the congested slips, listened to the jabbering groups of immigrants just landed from Ellis Island, each tagged with a red label, spelled out barbaric foreign places—"Funchal"—"Pernambuco"—"Haiti"—"Tangier"—"Martinique."

"Take me, Simon!—I want to go there!" begged David, jumping up and down. "I want to go in a big ship."

"Some time, old man."

"How soon?"

"When you're in long trousers, maybe."

"Are there lions there?"

"I guess so, in some places." It was hard to be general and accurate at the same time.

"And camels and elephants?"

"Like as not!"

"My mother doesn't like lions. They make her head ache. You don't get headaches, do you?"

"Not often. Sometimes. I don't have 'em on Saturdays."

They studied the samples of paper currency behind the wired windows of shipping-agents and dealers in "foreign exchange," peeked into unfragrant Syrian tenements and Greek restaurants smelling of pistache, were sucked upward with a roar of mighty wind to the top of the Woolworth Building, and became intimate with the "hell-bender," the little sea-horses, and other inhabitants of the softly lighted tanks of the Aquarium. They explored the Palisades and the northern wilderness of the Bronx, following the river-path afoot from where the little painted statue of the Civil War veteran stands in

mid-stream, back through the gorge with its grove of giant hemlocks, past the waterfall below the "Lorillard Mansion," along the quiet reaches where the wood-ducks swim among the reeds, across the Pelham Parkway and through the Zoo to the retired "Boat-House Restaurant," with its stuffed heads of wild animals, its rickety mechanical organ, its hot toast and milk and tea—provided as a reward for little boys who had not once complained of being tired. Then they would walk to the subway that was really an elevated, and David would fall fast asleep, with his head in Simon's lap, and Simon would almost forget that he wanted a child of his own.

"Such a dear little boy! So serious—and polite!" said Vira, who had shown a keen interest in David from the moment she had first seen him. "I don't think I ever saw a child who had such consideration for other people. I love him. May I kiss you, David?"

David kissed her without self-consciousness.

"Come and have lunch with us," he said.

"O, I'm afraid—" she began, then glanced at Simon.

"Why not?" he asked.

"I'd just adore to!"

"Well, we'd adore having you! Come along!"

It was the first time in months that Simon had had a chance to talk with Vira, uninterrupted. David had elected the Bronx again, and while he ran ahead, throwing sticks into the water and playing his small pirate games, they fell back into their old relationship. It seemed now perfectly natural to both of them that she should be calling him 'Simon.' She had always been a friendly little girl, simple and direct, if she was reserved, and he found her companionship on that winter afternoon particularly restful. He needed rest and knew it—he was as yet unconscious of needing companionship. Clarice

and he had dined at Mrs. Rynall's the night before and he had drunk several cocktails and a great deal too much champagne in a futile effort to force himself into an agreeable mood. The Rynalls were a stepping-stone into "the banking set," Clarice had explained, and if he could get some of Rynall's business his future would be made. The Rynalls were just "rolling." Tom Rynall gave his wife a million every time she had a baby—and she had had five. So Simon capered as best he could to her piping, laughing with false mirth at his host's rancid stories and the banalities of his hostess. He had certainly not made a hit with Rynall!

"Never mind!" Clarice had said as he voiced his dissatisfaction. "I know one thing. If Laura ever wants to get a divorce she'll come to you all right. You're perfectly solid with her."

"Why should she want a divorce? She's happily married, she's got five children and a husband who's crazy about her. What more does she want?"

"I don't think she's particularly happy. Tom's a regular bull in a china shop, socially. She's bound before long to meet some one she likes a lot better—and she's got her five million—salted safely away, all her own! She's lucky. Most women are anchored to their husbands."

He had dreamed that night of women shackled to their husbands and of men shackled to their wives—by chains of gold. He had awakened with a heavy sense of futility. Clarice lay on her back in her own bed. In repose her profile had struck him as cold and discontented.

At the office, harassed by a series of interruptions, he had been unable to accomplish anything. Why had he gone out to that infernal dinner and listened to the yapping of those fat fools? What was it all about, anyway?

What did he care whether or not the refunding mort-

gage on the Lone Star Southwestern ranked the debenture of the Santa Fé spur? What did he care about anything?

Then at lunch time David had peeked in shyly through the office door and, pushing it open, had come running in with open arms. He knew that he did care about something, and cared about it most terribly!

§ 3

In that sheltered ravine it was absolutely still save for the smothered gurgle of the snow-blanketed stream and the tiny rustling of the withered shards on the nearby bushes, but if one listened intently enough one became conscious of a soundless pulsation—neither a roar nor a rumble, but an echo of both—that signified the distant city. Occasionally a faint honk—whether of wild goose or of motor it were hard to say—broke the utter silence, or the whisper of wind-swept snow particles against dried leaves, the clink and twang of the ice as it buckled. David was out of sight, investigating something beneath the bridge.

"How still it is!" said Vira under her breath. "Can you smell the hemlocks?"

"Takes you back to School House Ledge!" answered Simon. "Gosh, but I'm glad we came here! I thought I'd go out of my mind this morning."

"You oughtn't to work so hard."

"Got to! Can't help it! That's what they pay me for."

"Do you remember how you once said you'd like to be a judge?"

"A swell chance—I've got to make money!"

She started to say something and suppressed it. He looked down, reading her thoughts, and she lifted her

eyes and smiled. They felt very friendly together. The hemlock boughs were filtering the sun, lost somewhere behind the purple grove; blue shadows lay across the white path of the river traversed by a ragged black line where the current flowed strongest.

Overhead the sky was golden, but here they stood in twilight, their faces nipped by the wind.

"Makes you want to live in the country!" he said, taking a deep breath. "I get awfully sick of New York every once in a while."

She looked at him diffidently.

"May I tell you something?"

"Sure. Anything you want!"

"Uncle Isaac and Otto are both worried about you. Uncle Isaac says you're throwing yourself away. He says you could be anything you wanted to—that you've got a very unusual mind. Why don't you work on your book? You haven't touched it in three months!"

"God knows I'd like to! O, Vira!" He faced her. "I'm leading a hell of a life!" He felt ready to sob. She saw it and would have given anything to comfort him.

"Poor Simon!"

"It's a mess!"

Impulsively she put her gloved hand on his.

"I wish I could help you!"

"You can! You do! I never realized before how much. Honestly, Vira, I—I don't know what I'd do without you!"

Her cheeks reflected the color of the afterglow.

"I'm so—glad!"

He was aware that something had happened, but he was not conscious of exactly what. He merely knew that she was very dear to him. Just then David clambered out from among the shrubbery.

"I'm a robber!" he shrilled, aiming a dead branch at them. "Hold up your hands!"

They did so, laughing, and Simon found that Vira's was still in his.

"You're prisoners!" announced David. "Handcuffed together! I'm taking you to my cave. It's way down the river where the bears and lions are. Don't let go your hands. If you do, I'll shoot!"

So, for a little space, they walked hand in hand along the river-bank, while David marched behind them with his branch held carefully at "ready." Then Vira tore herself away and ran ahead, with David in full cry behind her. She ran swiftly, turning and dodging, until the child was exhausted by the pursuit, then grabbed and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Now I've paid the ransom—you must let me go!" she laughed, hardly out of breath.

"What is ransom?" he panted.

"I've kissed you."

David waited for Simon to come up with them. It was clear that he did not want his foster-father to feel left out of the game.

"Give me a ransom, daddy!" he said. "And give Vira one, too!"

For the three of them to be playing there in the snow together evoked a vivid memory of his own childhood, when he and his parents had romped and snowballed one another in Louisburg Square. He realized now that it had been the happiest time in his life so far—much the happiest! He had a curious sensation that they three were living it all over again. Happy days in the narrow red-brick old house—the sunshine gilding the back-yards—the fire smouldering in the little library with its leathery smell—his white-haired grandfather

with his lean face—the codfish balls and baked beans on Sundays, and his father smoking his pipe in bed and reading *Puck*—the long tramps to Roxbury and Brookline, when he used to come back so tired,—oh, so tired!—and sit in his mother's lap in the firelight, with her arms about him, and watch the shadows cast by the street-lamps upon the white walls and ceiling! With a warm rush it all came back to him! That simple happy life with his father and mother—the dear, sweet, beautiful mother that he had lost so young! The tears burned in his eyes.

She turned and looked at him.

"What is it, Simon?"

He dashed his arm across his face.

"Oh, nothing!"

"Why did you sigh like that?"

He did not look at her.

"I don't know. Did I? I was just thinking of old times—when I was a little boy."

"Didn't you have a happy boyhood?"

"I had a wonderful boyhood—until I lost my mother."

She waited until he had mastered himself and then walked on beside him. The azure had faded out of the sky and unseen lamps shone through the trees.

"Won't you tell me about her, Simon? Was she very lovely?"

"You make me think of her," he said. "I used to love to sit in her lap in the twilight and have her sing to me or read out of a book called 'On a Pin-Cushion,' in which the different pins told their experiences to one another. We called it our 'Cosey Time' and she made up some verses about it. It wasn't much as poetry, I fancy, but I thought it was the most wonderful poem in the world. I say it to David sometimes."

"Can't you say it for me now?"
"If you'd like to hear it.

"I like to see the street-lamps a-shining on the wall
And watch the shadows, upside down, of tiny things made tall;
I like to watch folk in the rain and feel all snug inside,
For after six o'clock at night I like at home to 'bide.

I like to watch the firelight and see the sparks a-dying,
I like to stroke the drowsy cat and hear the kettle sighing,
But most of all I like the smell of buttered toast and tea,
For Cosey Time's the nicest time for little chaps like me.

I like to kneel at mother's side and mumble off my prayers,
For, even if you've not been good, it robs the night of cares.
I like to snuggle into bed and tightly shut my eyes
And dream of fighting crocodiles and eating monstrous pies.

I like the 'comfy' feeling that comes when play is done,
I like to rest my aching feet,—I've had enough of fun.
And then I like just to pretend a tired boy to be,
For Cosey Time's the nicest time for little chaps like me."

"I think it's sweet!" said Vira. "Dear little Simon!"

"When I think of how she loved me!" he said. "I often wonder what she'd think of the life I'm leading now!—Gosh! Isn't it queer!"

She took his hand again and held it, and as they followed the path along the river, with David running on ahead and the crisp snow crunching beneath their feet, something hitherto congealed gave way inside him, like the melting of ice under the sympathetic warmth of spring. All the long-pent-up emotions burst their walls and came pouring out. He told Vira about his grandfather—about his brave and rebellious father—about old Stepp and Rudesheim and "Karl," the dachshund, and the quartette—and "Smith & Horton's,"—and Jimmie

Murphy and the measles—and his mother's death—and after that they were silent until the lights of Pelham Parkway showed them that they were nearly at the bridge.

Then he told her of his school days at Rugger's, and how he locked old Dignum in his study and threw the key in the pond—and about waiting on table in the White Mountains—and the "Copper Lambs"—and the "Defence of Lucknow," and his midnight visit to the dean, at which Vira laughed until she nearly slipped on the ice and he had to take her arm to keep her from falling—and how nice the dean was to him after that—and how he made the crew and stayed on for an extra year at Cambridge—and played "Sir Andrew Aguecheek" at the Cambridge Dramatic—even about Phyllis Onderdonk—although he had never so confided in any one before. And she listened and laughed and wept a little—and they were enormously content and happy in each other's company.

It was dark by the time they reached the Boat-House Restaurant, and a polished silver moon, cradling another orb in her arms, shone clear upon the snow. They had almost forgotten about David, who plodded sturdily along behind. Now they waited beside the vestibule for him to catch up. Through the windows they could see the rows of stuffed heads upon the walls—the relics of antelope, water-buffalo, wart-hogs, bison, and caribou who had died in captivity—staring glassily down upon the rows of empty tables. A single waiter loitered by the cigar-stand. In a remote, dimly lit corner, partially secluded by a screen, sat a lone couple—the limousine standing in the roadway was evidently theirs.

"This place is absolutely deserted in winter," said Simon. "I found it just by accident. I guess nobody

comes here unless he wants to avoid being seen. What do you suppose David can be doing? Hurry up, David!"

"I'm coming!" came a tiny voice from out of the darkness.

Just then the couple at the table arose and Simon saw that it was Clarice with Buckley Thorn.

He could not tell whether Vira, who was standing in the shadow, had recognized them or not.

"Don't you think it's rather late?" he asked hurriedly, as he led her back along the path. "I have an idea David ought to be getting home!"

That Clarice should have taken tea with Thorn in such a remote spot might not have struck him as in any way sinister, had it not been for the emotional state into which his talk with Vira had thrown him. There was obviously no more harm in their having tea in Bronx Park than at the Ritz.

Yet he did not like the idea of Clarice going off alone like that with Thorn! Had any one else seen them at the restaurant, a false interpretation might easily have been put upon the incident. He himself had told Vira that people usually did not go there in winter unless they wished to avoid being seen. They had much better not invite unfriendly gossip. He would give her a word of warning.

But he had no sooner made up his mind to do so than he perceived himself to be in an awkward position. If he should disclose the fact that he had seen her and Thorn at "The Boat-House" she would be apt to inquire how he happened to be there—with the result that Vira would be brought in, and he did not want Vira's presence on their afternoon ramble to become known to Clarice. She would be more than likely to say something unpleasant about her. It would be a perfectly good

counter to his question of "What were you doing out there with Buckley Thorn?" for her to retort "What were you doing with Vira Bradley?" Of course, if Clarice asked him a direct question he would tell her; otherwise it was none of her business. If she was too selfish to look after her own child, she ought not to object because some other woman did.

Clarice welcomed him gaily on his return. She was dressed in a flimsy negligée of light blue, unusually becoming and girlish, and she kissed him so affectionately that his heart accused him of injustice. The cellaret was open upon the shiny sideboard, his favorite cocktail already prepared, the artificial gas-log burning upon the domestic hearth. It was the first evening they had been at home alone together in a month, and her obvious desire to make a party of it increased his sense of disloyalty. She was more like the Clarice he had first known than she had been for months.

"Isn't it nice to be just by ourselves again, darling! I do miss the old quiet evenings, don't you? I know you must think me a horrid, neglectful mother sometimes!"

She came and seated herself in his lap.

"But, Simon dear, it's only because I love you so and have your career so much at heart. I often wonder if I don't love you much too much. I'd rather be with you than with any one else in the world!"

He kissed her. Yes, she did love him!

"And now I'm going to give you a little surprise. You know you spoke the other day of Buckley Thorn being here so much? He's tremendously interested in you. He'd do anything in the world to help you along. He promised me months ago that whenever he possibly could, he'd try to throw some business your way. And he has. Nothing very much as yet, perhaps, but enough

to show that he was in earnest. Anyhow, he's been on the lookout right along and now——"

She gave his head a playful twist.

"Now it's come! You're going to have the biggest will case on record—involving millions. And, if you win, we'll be rich! Really and truly rich, Simon! Buckley has been working on it for ten days, but he only got the people lined up yesterday. He's perfectly delighted. And this afternoon he took me off for a long motor run and told me all about it. It's absolutely cinched. Buckley saw Mr. Robinson this morning, and it is fully understood that the case comes into the office through him and is a part of the business in which you share. Isn't it great!"

Clarice as usual was somewhat vague as to details, but by the time they had finished dinner there was no doubt in Simon's mind that the matter was one of genuine legal importance. A certain Miss Lydia Hammersly, famous as an eccentric recluse, and reputed to be worth in the neighborhood of four or five millions, had died leaving most of her fortune to charity, with a beggarly pittance of only a million or so to her relatives, among them a business associate of Thorn's. It appeared that most of the lawyers in New York had been desirous of getting into the case, but by astute handling and the exercise of considerable diplomacy, the mining man had succeeded in inducing the heirs and next-of-kin to forsake their personal legal advisers and to intrust to Robinson, Myer & Burr the task of remedying the injustice and assuaging their injured feelings by breaking the will.

§ 4

Mr. Robinson greeted Simon on Monday morning with unprecedented warmth.

"I certainly congratulate you, my dear fellow! This Hammersly case is a real plum! It ought to mean a clear million to us. Those charitable institutions will never dare go to trial. All we shall have to do to bring them to terms will be to file our objections. It's the biggest thing that has come our way in years. Naturally, in view of its importance, I shall take personal charge of the preparation myself, but you shall appear for the firm, conduct all the proceedings, and try the case. If there is a trial it will be a *cause célèbre*. You'll be famous, my boy—famous!"

Simon, who knew nothing of the facts in the case, had assumed from what Clarice said that the testatrix could easily be proven to have been insane at the time of executing her will.

"What will be the ground of our objections?" he now inquired.

"Mental incapacity—with perhaps an allegation of undue influence, for the sake of good measure."

"But wasn't Miss Hammersly insane?" asked Simon.

"Perhaps not exactly insane in the technical sense, but she had a pronounced case of mysophobia, besides being seventy-nine years old. No woman as old as that ought to be allowed to make a will, anyhow! That's almost enough in itself."

Simon reflected that Mr. Robinson was himself seventy-three.

"Besides which she was a chronic invalid, had almost every kind of disease known to man. Our tactics must be the same as we employed in the Fletcher case, last year. We must take the position that the testatrix was the victim of senile dementia. It doesn't take much to persuade a New York jury that money ought to stay in the family. We can show that she had been acting in an

eccentric manner for years—was at times quite irrational, that she entertained all sorts of violent and totally unreasonable prejudices against people, that while she had an enormous fortune she lived in a most miserly way. Why, she even used to go around the house after the servants, turning off the electric lights! And the way she would quarrel with trades-people over their bills was scandalous—she'd go into regular paroxysms. During her lifetime she hardly gave anything away at all. Now she leaves most of her fortune to charities in which she never showed the slightest interest while she was alive!"

Simon was disappointed.

"I've known that to happen even in the case of persons who were not mentally deficient," he remarked. "Was she able to manage her own affairs—make investments—run her domestic establishment?"

"Only in a general way. Even if they can prove that she did make investments of one sort or another, we shall be able to show that it was just a matter of routine. She only followed the suggestions made by others—a mere automaton! She could have done all that and still be incompetent to make a will. Even if she appeared competent, she was really incompetent. She never would have a telephone in the house, for one thing. You can see the effect of that on the jury! And she had delusions of poverty—was forever talking about having to go to the poorhouse!"

"Maybe she was joking?"

Mr. Robinson looked pained.

"She wasn't! You may be quite sure of that! Another thing—she had a mania for cats! Her rooms were full of them. She even refused to sell the vacant lot next her own house, so that they could have a place to play in."

"Well," commented Simon, "I can't say that, so far, it seems to me to be a very strong case. The fact that an old lady of seventy-nine hates dirt, is fond of cats, lives economically, has occasional fits of temper, and only leaves a couple of her millions to relatives isn't, to my mind, much evidence of mental incapacity. Perhaps she didn't like them."

"That will be for the jury to say! Naturally I haven't had time to go over all the proofs with you, but you may take my word for it that when you talk to the witnesses you won't have the slightest doubt that Miss Hammersly was a 'senile dement.' And, of course, you won't have to rely merely upon your own opinion! We shall have at least half a dozen experts who will testify to that effect."

"Who are they?"

"I don't know yet, exactly," answered Mr. Robinson. "Unfortunately most of our better-known New York psychiatrists have already been retained by the other side, so that we shall have to send outside for ours—but we shall have no difficulty in getting 'em. I've made each of the contestants put up twenty-five thousand dollars for expenses, so that we have a war-chest of nearly a quarter of a million. What do you say to that!"

Simon was glad that Mr. Robinson did not seem to expect an answer to the question. He suspected that Robinson, Myer & Burr were not above bringing a strike suit, but he had no right to judge any case before he had seen the witnesses and examined into its merits. Moreover, had not Miss Hammersly been afflicted with mysophobia? Whatever it might be, it sounded serious. Mr. Robinson's look of apprehension faded to one of relief.

"I'll send the papers in to you, and after you've seen the witnesses we can have another talk."

He got up and laid his hand on Simon's shoulder.

"Don't forget that even if these people turn out not to have an overwhelmingly strong case, they are entitled to their day in court—the right to have a jury pass upon the question of whether or not their claim is substantiated by the evidence. You and I are luckily not called upon to decide the issue. We are merely advocates—sworn officers of the court, under a solemn obligation to do the best we can for our clients. We have, as it were, been drafted for the battle, and we cannot, with proper regard to our oaths, refuse to serve when we are called upon. We merely present our side of the case, emphasizing its strong points. The lawyers for our opponents do the same for theirs. We don't decide anything. The jury do that. We may think one thing or another, but what we think is wholly immaterial and ought not to affect the way in which we perform our duty.

"So many young men," Mr. Robinson sighed, "have the foolish idea that, when they get up in court and make an argument to a judge or address a jury, they are expressing their own views, when in reality all they are doing is making an appeal on behalf of some one else, to the effect that the law ought to be construed thus and so, or that the evidence supports such and such a proposition. You have too much sense for that. Now, if we go into this case, it won't make the slightest difference whether you personally believe that the testatrix was rational or irrational, sane or insane, competent or incompetent, at the time she made her will. Vulgarly speaking, nobody gives a damn what you think. As an advocate you have no right to a personal opinion. The heirs have a right to object to the probate of the will and to break it if they can. They have a right to be represented by the best counsel they can get. They have come to us and we have taken upon our shoulders and

our consciences the responsibility for their interests. We are their standard-bearers! Their cause is, for the time being, ours! We cannot shirk it or play the coward's part!"

He dropped his hand once more on Simon's shoulder.

"Well, see you to-morrow afternoon! How's the lovely wife? Lucky fellow! You must both dine with me soon again."

It should be recorded that the Honorable John Henry Robinson was unanimously re-elected as chairman of the Committee on Professional Ethics at the Inter-State Bar Association meeting the following July.

§ 5

It did not seem to Simon that the witnesses sent in to him for examination by Mr. Robinson during the next few weeks were of a kind to shed much light on Miss Hammersly's capacity to make a will. It was quite true that the collective picture they presented was that of a somewhat eccentric old lady who had an inordinate fondness for animals, especially cats, together with a mania for cleanliness, but in spite of her peculiarities it seemed to Simon that she was a person of exceptional will-power and executive capacity. She had continued certain old-fashioned prejudices—which the next generation had outgrown and later ones had never heard of—such as, that the outlets of bathtubs ought to be kept corked in order to prevent the escape of sewer-gas, and she had a habit of rubbing the knobs of doors and the arms of chairs with a damp cloth, after the departure of visitors, in order to remove any contaminating germs they might have left behind them. She had a horror of soiled linen and dirty bills, and boiled all the metal money that came

into her possession, before carrying it about with her. In short, she had what is technically known as mysophobia, but that it could affect, or had affected, her capacity to dispose of her estate seemed to Simon preposterous.

The fact, however, remained that each and every witness who came from Mr. Robinson—after describing some incident in which Miss Hammersly's fondness for cats or desire for cleanliness figured—unhesitatingly and emphatically affirmed that the conduct of the testatrix on such occasions impressed him or her as distinctly irrational. In view of this how could he, Simon asked himself, question the propriety of allowing a jury to pass on her testamentary capacity? What difference did it make, anyway, who got the old lady's money?

Mr. Robinson reported progress all along the line. The smaller charities were all anxious for their legacies, he said, and were exerting constant pressure on the larger and less needy ones to compromise in return for an immediate settlement. He also had an ally on the board of trustees of the Museum of Natural History who was, as he called it, "boring from within." He himself would be responsible for the preparation of the hypothetical question to be submitted to the experts, and he assured Simon that it would be a good one—a "corker"! It was only necessary to find a witness who would testify to some apparently irrational act on the testatrix's part, and you could put his whole story right into the hypothetical question, no matter how much it had been damaged by cross-examination. In a word, you could insert everything that any witness had testified to, whether you believed it or not, since, according to legal theory, it was the jury's business to decide what facts had been proved and what had not, and to give such weight to them as in their opinion they deserved.

Mr. Robinson sent for Simon one morning in early March.

"It's done!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands as if to remove the liver spots. "I finished it at one o'clock this morning—and, if I do say it myself, it's a pretty conclusive document. I have simply recited in their order the various physical ailments with which the testatrix was afflicted and followed them with a series of episodes, each of which is characterized by one or more witnesses as irrational. It fills seventy pages. By the time you get through reading it you'll have no doubt that the old woman was crazy as a bedbug."

"You have prepared this hypothetical question in advance of the trial?" asked Simon, who had vaguely supposed that Mr. Robinson would wait until the witnesses had given their testimony and then formulate his question on the basis of the evidence.

"Oh, yes. We have to get something ready for our experts to go on. They read the question and then say whether, provided the testimony in any way measures up to what is contained in it, they can testify that, in their opinion, the testatrix was mentally incompetent to make a will."

"And if they don't?"

Mr. Robinson flicked the ash off his cigar.

"Then we know in advance what we're up against—and try to meet it. Or if the right sort of evidence isn't incorporated in the question, we do our best to supply the deficiency—get new witnesses, if necessary. Sometimes we have to get new experts."

"I see. Where do you find these experts?"

"Oh, everywhere! Of course, whenever possible, it's a good thing to get a man connected with some institution for the insane. It makes a better impression on the

jury. They like fellows who have had experience. These chaps used to call themselves 'alienists,' but the swell term now is 'psychiatrists.' They're very particular about it. Personally, I don't know the difference."

"Where did the ones you are going to use in this case come from?"

"I got one from New Jersey, two from Pennsylvania, one from Cleveland, one from Washington, and one from Boston—Dr. Hunziker. He's a sort of 'bell-wether'—keeps the others in line and makes 'em toe the mark. We pay him something extra and call him 'medical counsel.' I've had him in no end of cases. By the way, did you know that the executors have retained Judge Furman to represent them? That will make it much easier for us. He's a good friend of ours!"

For some reason the news excited no similar enthusiasm on the part of Simon. He would have much preferred not to have "Uncle Isaac" in the case.

CHAPTER XI

Despite her failure to get their names into the "Social Register," Clarice managed on several occasions to achieve mention in the society columns of the newspapers. Nevertheless, she was not satisfied with her progress.

"I want to meet the young people of my own age!" she forever insisted. "The people we know are all right, but they're too old. Look at Esther King! She's forty-five if she's a day. If you'd make just the least little effort to have me see something of Vira Bradley——"

Simon's neglect to do so did not prevent Clarice from habitually referring to Vira when they went out to dinner. They went out more than ever, for Clarice was an opportunist and a believer in the "follow-up" principle. She made a point of being introduced to all those with whom she was thrown in contact, and, if she regarded them as in any degree worth while, of invariably calling herself to their attention when next they met. In this way she had accumulated, in a few months, a list of acquaintances astounding to Simon. Just now she was concentrating all her attention upon Diana Maitland, who was the youngest woman she knew of any real social distinction, and she had teased Thorn into giving an opera party to which she might invite her. She and Simon had only been to the opera once before during the entire winter.

"Of course, the opera isn't socially at all what it used to be," she told him. "It's not really fashionable any

more. The chic young people almost never go. But it's still 'eminently respectable,' and it's the sort of place we ought to be seen. It gives a certain cachet that nothing else quite does. When we're rich I'd like to have a box—even if only to give away. Just now the more we go the better, because the people in the other boxes will see us and ask who we are and remember that they've seen us there. It gives a woman the chance, as nothing else does, to wear her best clothes. And you can find out, yourself, that way, who people are. The last time I went, for instance, I'd never seen Mrs. John Graham—Rhoda McLane that was—those are people we ought to know—he's one of the richest men in the world—and there she was, right in the next box, and Esther introduced me. The next time I meet her I'm going to tell her how much I admire the work of the Maternity Centre—that's her favorite charity—and maybe she'll ask me to go on the board."

By the night of the opera party Simon was sick and tired of hearing about its prospective glories. She had gone over it several dozen times. First they were to dine at Pierre's—themselves, two—the Maitlands, four—Buckley Thorn, five—and Ava Joyce, six—"and if you don't think that's smart you don't know what is! There aren't two more fashionable women anywhere!"

"Why not say three?"

"Darling! Well—sometime—maybe."

There was a double bill that evening—"Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci"—and Clarice, decrying fashionable lateness, had left the others at the restaurant and gone on ahead with Thorn, in order that she might be sure of hearing the intermezzo. Simon, Miss Joyce, and the Maitlands, who had lingered for coffee, followed a few minutes later in the latter's car. Broadway, as

usual, was blocked with subway construction, and by the time they reached the opera-house it was nearly nine o'clock.

The foyer was empty; the act was "on." From behind the closed doors of the darkened parquet came the smothered sobbing of violins. A gray-haired vestiere hurried forward, opened the door of the box, and relieved the women of their wraps. Clarice's was already hanging from one of the hooks, directly beneath a man's silk hat. The imminent juxtaposition of the two affected Simon unpleasantly. Thorn arose from the darkness as they entered. Every seat in the orchestra was filled, the space behind the parquet crowded with "standees," the gallery jammed to the very ceiling. The intermezzo was nearly at an end—the terse, melodic progressions foretelling the inexorable tragedy to come. Melody—drama—death were in those vibrant bars.

The last poignant strains died away, and the audience broke into quickly hushed applause as the leader tapped with his baton and the music began again. Simon found himself stirred as never before by the hot-blooded story of passion, betrayal, and retribution. The cymbals crashed out the final chords of despair and satisfied revenge, the curtain fell, and the lights came on. Clarice turned to the others, clapping perfunctorily, after the manner of a rather bored and condescending habitué.

"Gigli is singing quite well, isn't he?—Poor Turiddu! I can't help feeling badly about him!—Who is the fright that sang Lola?" She at once began levelling her glasses at the various boxes, mentioning the occupants by name whenever she knew them, and admiring or condemning their costumes.

The diluted light brought out the ravishing allurement

of her cream-white skin, giving it a golden tinge as if reflected from her hair. The "V" of her dress reached almost to the waist, disclosing a flawless back full of soft undulations, with two dimples beneath the shoulder-blades. Her black velvet sheath conveyed a peculiar suggestion of nudity beneath. One had the feeling that she might at any moment step out of it and walk away—without anything on whatever.

The radiance from the huge central chandelier mingled at cross-purposes with the blatant illumination in front of the boxes, diffusing over the house a luminous mist, through which Simon found it difficult to see. The ceaseless movements of hands, faces, and programmes, in the orchestra below, resembled the tossing of whitecaps. Red beacons, like distant lighthouses beyond the breakers, marked the exits. He wondered whether the purpose of putting those glaring lights in front of the boxes had been to shield their occupants from the vulgar gaze of those below, or to advertise the presence of the socially elect.

Raising his eyes, it seemed to Simon that the opera-house was like the interior of a gigantic gilded aviary, with rows of little private bird-cages full of myriads of bright-colored birds, who fluttered and preened themselves and softly cooed—bluebirds, doves, and scarlet tanagers, parrots, owls, and birds of paradise, with a proper proportion of crows. The most gaudily tinted birds sat in twos and threes in the parterre boxes which circled the house from one end of the stage to the other. He amused himself by deciding to what species each one belonged. That plump little debutante in the fluffy yellow dress, for example, could not be mistaken. The white-crested old girl with the beak, next door, was surely a cockatoo, and that skinny hag in vermilion a

flamingo. All kinds! But with the owls and parrots in the majority. Their clatter was like that of the bird-house at the Bronx Zoo at feeding time. Among these birds Clarice shone a veritable *oiseau de feu*, chattering like the rest.

"There's Milly Tyler! Hasn't she got a nerve to show herself here, after the testimony in her divorce case last week? How well your sister Esther looks! That silver-gray is so becoming to her. There's Mrs. Grandam! How do you do! How do you do! Who's in the Vanderbilt box? Oh, it's that English painter, Sir John Lavery, and his beautiful wife. There's General Fosdick over there. Those army men have such dowdy wives! How do you do, Mrs. Ballston! How do you—there's Gussie Cranshaw! Who's that dark man with him? Rather distinguished, don't you think? How do you do! M-m-m—Sadie Parks! Just look at that face! As I was just saying—isn't it too bad that Mascagni never wrote anything worth while except Cavalleria?"

All the time she kept searching the boxes with her glasses, sometimes asking the names of the men but never those of the women, for it was her pose that she knew all among the latter worth knowing.

"Why, there's Vira Bradley!" she exclaimed, turning to Simon and pointing to a box on the other side of the horseshoe. "There's Vira, Simon! Don't you see her? You really ought to go over and speak to her and give her my love!"

His instant pleasure at the knowledge that Vira was just across the house was curdled by the fact that Clarice should affect intimacy with her. Well, it was just her way! Borrowing Thorn's glasses, he focussed them in the direction indicated by his wife. He had trouble in finding Vira at first.

"Which box is she in?" he asked.

"Number eighteen—the one next to the woman in white. She's wearing that old rose."

Her use of the demonstrative seemed to imply that Clarice was familiar with the dress and thought that it was about time for Vira to discard it. Simon counted the boxes and looked again. He had never seen Vira in evening dress, and was unprepared for the difference that it made in her appearance. Could that be Vira? That elegant, graceful woman with the fillet of diamonds encircling her forehead, the color of whose gown so melted into the hangings of the box that the whole seemed but a background for her face and arms? She was sitting with her hands in her lap, her head slightly bent, talking to the woman beside her, the sweep of her young neck and back graceful and appealing. Her beauty was all the more striking in contrast to the plainness of her companion—a homely girl in black velvet, whose hair was drawn straight back from her forehead without regard to the prevailing mode.

"I haven't seen Vira for perfect ages!" ran on Clarice. "That's the trouble with living in New York. One never sees anybody one knows! How well she's looking!"

"Perfectly lovely!" agreed Ava Joyce. "There's something quite noble about her face."

"If you ask me," interrupted Buckley Thorn, although nobody had asked him, "the best thing about that Bradley girl is her neck and shoulders. Do you notice how perfectly formed her arms are?"

"Vira certainly has exquisite arms!" agreed Diana. "They're so slender and taper so nicely at the wrists. What I like most is the way her hair grows over her forehead and her eyes look straight out at you from under her

brows. In many ways I think she's the most charming girl of her age I know."

"Do go and speak to her, dear!" urged Clarice. "Tell her I'll look for her in the vestibule, after the opera."

Simon was aware that Clarice's display of interest in Vira was solely for the benefit of her own party. She really did not care two straws whether he spoke to Vira or not. He could see that there were other people in the back of the box opposite, and his natural shyness disinclined him to force his way among strangers. He had never "visited," did not know the technique. Besides, this new Vira frightened him. She was too much like a princess. He did not belong in this brilliant company of "fair women and brave men." He was just a plain, clod-hopping sort of fellow, who felt awkward and out of place in gay society. If Clarice wanted to go in for this kind of thing she ought to have married some one more adapted to it. You'd think she owned the opera-house!

From where he sat he could see every motion Clarice made—every gesture, every movement of her lips. Beautiful she certainly was! But with what a different sort of beauty from the calm loveliness of the girl opposite. Her face was never for an instant in repose; and every now and again her mouth narrowed and that little foxlike expression glinted in her jade eyes. She was like a diamond, he told himself, scintillating but hard! While Vira—Vira was like a sapphire, with restful, cool depths! You could counterfeit a diamond—but not a sapphire. Was Clarice counterfeit? He must be fair to her! Was not this her natural milieu? Was she not by birth, education, and association a part of this bejewelled world? Was she not, after all, a Hungerford?

The curtain in the doorway behind him bellied and he felt a breath of cold air on his neck. A couple of men

entered and pushed past toward the ladies. Simon seized the opportunity to escape. He would not thrust himself upon Vira and he did not care to hear Clarice talk about her. Taking his hat, he stepped into the carpeted passage behind the boxes. Here there were no bright-colored birds at all, only a lot of little wrens, starlings, and juncos—hopping in and out of the boxes. As he stood there, one of these little black birds came running around the corner, peeped through the window of the box, and hopped in the door.

"Looking for his dinner!" thought Simon. Almost immediately the little bird hopped out again, muttering to himself. He cocked his head at Simon apologetically.

"Bless me! I certainly thought that was Mrs. Bradshaw's box, and it was Mrs. Andrews'! I didn't want to speak to her at all!"

Simon, after an exceedingly brief career as an "extra man," had forsworn acting as carpet knight to elderly ladies who desired companionship at the opera. He did not begrudge the little men their free caviare and champagne, their kingfish and pompano, their *truite meuniere*, their *poulet à la bonne femme*, their *salad Russe*, their Madeira, their Napoleon brandy, their Coronas. Let them eat, drink, and be as merry as they could—fluttering down and pecking at the canary-seed that fell from the cages of the bigger birds—the ibises and the kingfishers, the pelicans and the dodos.

He walked around the back of the boxes to the landing at the head of the main stairway, and looked down at old Mr. Gard handing out rain-checks, and at the crowd surging behind the parquet, the music-loving folk that support grand opera—short, swart men with blue jowls, who looked like cigar salesmen—short, sallow

women with large white bosoms, who looked like corset-makers—even the best-dressed speaking with a foreign accent. Anxious venders of librettos scanned the milling throng.

"Book of the opera? Buy a book of the opera?"

Over the whole hung a haze of tobacco-smoke which drifted in from the vestibule.

He descended the stairs, strolled out into the foyer, and gazed for a moment or two at the framed photographs of operatic celebrities on the walls—Emma Eames as "Aïda," Farrar as "Butterfly," Pol Plançon as "Mephistopheles," Melba as "Juliet," Calvé as "Carmen," de Reszke as "Tristan," Nordica as "Isolde," Scotti as "Scarpia," Mary Garden as "Thais," Caruso as "Canio."

He circled the parquet with the procession, past the thirsty group awaiting their turn to drink out of the new-fangled "lily-cups," past the coat-room, then turned up the side staircase, where many of the "standees" were now resting, to his original point of departure. The boxes were active, the little early birds, who had hurried out betimes to get the social worms, being now reinforced by their more dignified and slightly less hungry brothers, all upon the same purpose bent—to call themselves to the attention of the *grandes dames* at whose expense they feasted and in whose gilded chairs they afterwards sat.

He struggled up the stairs through the crowd to the next landing, and fought his way into the high, studded smoking-room, passing Rex Hungerford, Clarice's cousin, who was coming out, but without a chance to speak to him. The noise here was incredible, the air reeking with smoke and cheap perfume. A "cue" had formed beside the row of telephone-booths which stood against the

wall, and as fast as a booth became empty it was immediately occupied by one of the impatient ones outside. Here in this vast relic of a past musical era, when refreshment of the body had been regarded as necessary to the uplift of the soul, the galleries and the stalls met in narcotic democracy. There was no type of racial physiognomy unrepresented in that jostling throng. Here the dress suit mingled with the black shirt of the Fascisti, silk hats with derbies and fedoras, long hair with bobbed, and short skirts with long. At one of the tables Simon recognized a well-known Fifth Avenue hostess who was having coffee with a bearded Frenchman in the picturesque blue uniform of the *chasseurs des Alpes*, while a quartet of girl music-students licked their ice-cream spoons just beside them. In the centre of the room sauntered a beautiful Argentine, in full Spanish costume of yellow pleated satin, high shell comb, black mantilla, and red shawl with sweeping fringe, but on the whole there was a markedly Italian flavor to the company. The blood of these devotees of music flowed near the surface.

Simon lit a cigarette and strolled to the other end of the room. These people interested him much more than the plutocrats in the boxes. He belonged, he decided, in the gallery rather than the parterre. The call-bell had begun ringing, and, like the sand in an hour-glass, the crowd converged and streamed out through the door.

Following in the wake of the others, he came unexpectedly upon Davis Pettibone leaning against a pillar. He had not seen Davis for something like six weeks.

"Hello, old man!" he said. "Strikes me you've rather neglected us lately."

Davis tossed his cigarette into the brass vase that served as a cuspidor and eyed Simon with solemnity.

The last of the crowd had disappeared. They were alone save for the girls who were putting the tables in order.

"Wha'ssat you say?"

"I said we'd missed you lately. It's time to get back to our seats, isn't it? Act's on."

He made this last remark, not because he thought Davis's condition more befitting the orchestra than the smoking-room, but in order to cover his own contemplated retreat. Davis raised a staying hand. With the other he clung to the pillar for support.

"Listen—you Simon Kent!" he directed, in that oracular tone common to the alcoholically exalted.

"Well, what is it? Get a move on!" replied Simon good-naturedly.

"We were boys together—weren't we?"

"Sure we were!"

"'Member when you called me a sneak—a liar—a dirty pig?"

"Oh, come along, Davis! Forget it! If I ever did, that was twenty years ago, when we were kids."

But Davis was not in a forgetting mood.

"Listen—you Kent!" he repeated, waving his forefinger in front of Simon's nose. "I've stood a—hc—lot from you—my frien'! My ole pal! 'Elephant never forgets'! An' a lot from that wife of yours! She turned me out, she did! But you never knew it! Oh, no! You never knew it! She was a good frien' o' mine when she wanted me! You know—fair-weather frien'!"

Simon took him by the elbow.

"We'll discuss this another time, Davis! Sorry if Clarice has hurt your feelings! Come around to tea some afternoon and we'll fix it up."

"Me? Come tea? No, no! I know where I'm not

wanted. I'm through! I've—hc—ab-dicated. 'The king is dead! Long live the king!'"

Simon turned and left him to take care of himself. Had Davis meant anything? He stopped short on the empty landing. Had the drunken Pettibone been trying to imply something about Clarice?

Why had he stopped coming to the house? Had Clarice just got bored and dropped him? Or had she found his constant presence inconvenient? The king is dead! Long live the king! Surely he, a preacher of independence for women, was the last person to complain because his wife had men friends! He did not begrudge Clarice having the best time that she could. She was a brilliant woman. He was proud of her. Yet, as he made his way back to the box, he admitted that he would prefer it if she sought to exercise her charm less generally. Would he, some day, be not wanted himself, perhaps?

The lights sank, and Tonio, the clown of "I Pagliacci," thrust his head through the curtains as Simon took his seat in the back of the darkened box. A burst of applause ran across the house.

"*Si pùo?*" Tonio, cap in hand, following the introductory flourish of the orchestra, bowed to the audience. "*Signore! Signori! Scusatemi se solo mi presento. Io sono il Prologo.*"

The rich baritone rose clear and plaintive. He seemed to Simon to be singing directly at them.

> "L'autore ha cercato invece pingervi uno squarcio di vita.
> Dunque, vedrete amar sì come s'amano gli esseri umani;
> Vedrete de l'odio; tristi frutti——"

"What is he saying?" he asked Diana.

"That he is the Prologue," she whispered. "He says that the author has simply borrowed a chapter from life,

that the actor is only a man with a heart like the rest of us, the story he tells you—true!"

Tonio flourished his cap.

"*Andiamo! Incominciate!*"

"Come, then! Ring up the curtain!"

More intently than any one in the packed rows of "standees," Simon listened to the passionate Calabrian love-story of how Nedda, the faithless wife of Canio, the head of a group of strolling players, falls in love with Silvio, a handsome peasant, only to be betrayed to her husband by Tonio, the clown, whose advances she has spurned. For half an hour—from the moment when, amid the cheers and laughter of the villagers and to the sound of trumpet and drum, Beppe, the harlequin, leads upon the stage the donkey drawing the gaily painted cart in which Nedda is lying and from which Canio, dressed as Pagliaccio, is pounding the drum and distributing his hand-bills—Simon forgot that he was Simon Kent.

That both that evening's operas were based on a wife's infidelity could not fail to turn his mind in that direction. Were women like that? Had Davis meant to insinuate anything? Could he have been trying to get around Clarice as Tonio had been with Nedda? Had she given him a similar cut across the face? And was he now looking for revenge? Could the analogy be carried further? Was there a Silvio?

The act came to an end and the opera-house sprang into light again. Clarice looked over her shoulder at him.

"Did you call on Vira?" she demanded.

He shook his head.

"No. Just had a smoke!"

"Oh, what a man!" She made a gesture of resignation. "Well, if you won't go, I suppose I'll have to!"

She faced the others.

"You won't think me rude if I just speak to Vira for a minute? I know that 'in ye olden days' women didn't visit, but nobody cares about that sort of thing any longer. I'll be right back. Come along, Simon."

The men arose to give her passage and Simon followed her out into the corridor behind the boxes.

"Do you think you ought to speak to Vira?" he asked. "I haven't seen any other women chasing around among the boxes."

"That doesn't matter!" she answered, hurrying ahead of him. "We mayn't be invited to the opera again this winter, and I want to show your little friend that we move in the same circles as she does. I want Ava and Diana to realize that I know some of the younger set, too. I'm going to make Vira Bradley be nice to me for once! Here we are—Number Eighteen, 'Isaac Furman'! Really, Simon, socially you're more of a liability than an asset! You don't help a little bit! Now do be your best—and back me up, like a good boy!"

The door was ajar and the curtain separating the anteroom from the box had been pushed back. Vira and her guest were alone.

"Come along!" whispered Clarice.

Smiling, she stepped forward, with Simon just behind her, and extended her hand.

"How do you do, Miss Bradley! I hope you don't mind Simon and me dropping in this way, so informally. The poor dear couldn't muster up courage to come alone!"

Vira greeted her cordially and shook hands with both of them—then, instead of introducing the girl beside her to Clarice, looked expectantly from one to the other without speaking, clearly under the assumption that

they were acquainted. Several seconds of embarrassment followed, during which Simon was uncomfortably aware of close scrutiny by the occupants of the adjoining boxes.

"Won't you sit down?" invited Vira, pulling forward a chair for Clarice, and Simon fancied that as her eyes met his her brows were faintly raised.

"Hasn't it been wonderful!" rhapsodized Clarice, including both Vira and her friend. "Isn't Gigli singing too marvellously! They say he is nearly as fine as Caruso, except for the famous 'sob'!" She turned to the girl. "Do you care for the opera?"

"Oh, yes; I love it!"

She had a friendly smile, in spite of her homely face.

"I'm with Ava Joyce and Diana Maitland just opposite—did you see us?"

Simon, who had remained standing, saw the portière sway as Rex Hungerford entered the box.

"Hello, Rex!" he said. "Thought I saw you up in the smoking-room. How's old Number Seven?"

They pumped each other's arms warmly.

"Rex!" called Vira. "Why don't you men sit down over here and make yourselves agreeable?"

Clarice suddenly got up. Bending over, she touched Vira's hand.

"I must be getting back—" she began hurriedly.

"Is that your wife?" whispered Hungerford. "I understand she's a connection of ours. Introduce me, won't you?"

But before Simon could comply, Clarice had slipped past them.

"You know Muriel, of course?"

"No," answered Simon feebly.

Hungerford shoved him forward.

"Muriel, this is 'Red' Kent, who rowed on the crew with me."

The homely girl gave Simon her hand.

"I'm so glad to meet you!" she said. "Was that Mrs. Kent? I wish I'd known. She's a second cousin of ours. Why didn't you introduce us, Vira?"

But Vira apparently did not hear the question.

The audience was streaming down the aisles. He would have liked to stay, but he must go—with his wife! He pressed Vira's hand and thought that he read understanding and perhaps sympathy in her face.

"Good night, Simon! I'll see you in the morning."

The corridor behind the boxes was empty save for a few belated blackbirds hopping back to their proper nests. Clarice was nowhere to be seen. In those few seconds of delay she had fled.

He sank down on the scarlet-cushioned lounge at the head of the stairs above the foyer, with his head in his hands. So this was the woman he had married! For the first time he saw her exactly as she was, in all her scheming duplicity. This was no social euphemism—no mere effort to make a favorable impression! "My cousin Muriel!" The Muriel with whom she was so intimate and of whom she was so fond, who would be so hurt if not invited to their wedding, the Muriel whose name figured so constantly in her conversation! She had never even so much as met her!

The call-bell was still sounding its tocsin of warning. From below came the voice of one of the ushers—"The act is on!" There was menace in the words. Yes, the act was on! The showdown had come! He could no longer believe anything that she had ever told him. There was no truth in her! She was not an honest woman. He could hear the pounding of Canio's drum.

The play within the play was about to begin. Was he but another Canio, deceived by another Nedda?

Some one sat down at the other end of the sofa and he looked sideways to find Davis grinning at him.

"Poor ol' Pagliaccio! Too bad 'bout ol' Pagliaccio!"

Was Davis playing Tonio? Bleary-eyed sensualist! To hell with all of them! With his hand on the wall, Simon felt his way along the corridor to the box and crept in. On the stage the villagers had gathered around the tent. A bell jangled and the curtains of the miniature theatre parted, disclosing a mimic scene representing the interior of a cottage. Nedda, arrayed as Columbine, was walking about awaiting her lover Harlequin, who could be heard singing outside.

What he had just found out about Clarice seemed worse than if he had made a discovery of her infidelity. It went to the root of her character. His entire faith in her had in an instant been destroyed. This woman sitting in the front of the box, with the glow from the footlights on her hair, was a stranger to him. Would he ever know what she really was? The music was deadened by the tumult inside his head. With the blurred vision of a fever patient he saw Pagliaccio, knife in hand, demand of Columbine the name of her lover, and, as she tried to escape, stab her in the back. He saw Silvio, hurrying to her rescue, receive in turn a thrust, and fall dead beside her. He saw Pagliaccio, standing stupefied above the two bodies, let the knife fall from his hand.

"*La commedia è finita!*"

Simon, who had been clinging to the curtains of the box as the violins rose to the heart-rending "*Ridi, Pagliaccio! Ridi, Pagliaccio!*" dropped weakly into a chair. The comedy was over! Laugh, Pagliacci!

The lights sprang up. The house rattled to continu-

ous applause, as Canio, Nedda, Tonio, and Beppe dragged each other to the footlights. Clarice was pale; she did not look at him; her voice sounded strained and artificial, as she bade the other women good-night.

Thorn dropped them at the apartment and they went up in the elevator without speaking. Simon unlocked the door and turned on the lights in the sitting-room, then took off and hung up his coat and hat. Clarice had seated herself upon the sofa without removing her wrap, and as he came back into the room she lowered her head among the pillows and began to sob. He had never before been able to withstand this sort of appeal from her, but to-night it did not move him. It was clear that she was waiting for him to come over, put his arm around her, lie down beside her, perhaps, and try to comfort her. But he had no impulse to do so. Crocodile's tears! Let her make what explanation she could—when she could! Presently her sobs ceased altogether and she sat up.

"Wasn't it terrible!" she gasped.

"What was terrible?" he returned coldly.

"The trick Vira Bradley played on me! It was just too nasty! She hates me! Well, I hate her, too!"

"What trick did she play on you?"

"Refusing to introduce me to Muriel Hungerford! What does she think I am? A gutter-snipe? She must have known we'd never met. Muriel must have told her so. They probably are intimate friends. She did it just to be mean!"

"I don't see what else she could do, after you had told her at lunch, in my presence, that you were so intimate with Muriel, your cousin. She had either to accept your statement or let you see that she knew you to be a liar—as you were. She preferred to be polite—that was all."

"Polite! Is that what you call it! It was just mean!

I was just trying to put my best foot forward. Every one does the same thing. They refer to other people by their first names, as if they knew them, when they don't, all the time. This was no different. I never said I actually knew Muriel. I merely said she might be hurt if I didn't ask her to my wedding. Well, she'd have a right to be. I'm her own cousin. I'd be hurt if she didn't ask me to hers."

"You have practically told me—and dozens of other people in my hearing—that you and she were intimate. You may not regard it as a lie, but it is one. You're the worst liar I ever met, bar none!"

She looked at him piteously.

"You ought to be fair, Simon!" she pleaded. "Whatever I am, you ought to give me credit for being truthful. I certainly gave you the evidence of it when we became engaged. I needn't have told you anything. But I did, just because I wanted to be honest with you. You said then that you'd never met anybody as truthful and honest as I was. I haven't changed. Truth is the virtue I admire most. I'd rather be truthful than anything in the world. If I'm not, if I fib a little now and then about things of no importance, it's merely because I love you so and want to——"

"For God's sake!" he interrupted harshly, "don't pull that stuff again about doing it on my account! You wouldn't know the truth if you saw it. You could give lessons to Ananias. The only question is what we are going to do about it."

"'Do about it'!" Her eyes were circles of pale-green. "What do you mean by 'do about it'?"

"We've got to do something about it," he repeated. "I don't know just what. I've got to think. I've known something was wrong for a long time."

"Don't you love me any more? You wouldn't let one little fib destroy your love for me—would you, Simon, when I love you so?"

"*Do* you—love me?" he asked.

"I love you more than anything in the world! More than life itself!" She spoke so earnestly that he half believed her. "How can you doubt it, Simon?"

Her eyes were starry with tears. Her mouth quivered.

"Oh, Clarice!" he cried, as for the last time he took her in his arms. She clung to him, stroking his cheeks and neck softly with her hands.

"I love you! Oh, I do love you, Simon!" she murmured.

He gathered her up more closely, lifting her face to his. Motionless, with veiled eyes, her head thrown back, her red-gold hair hanging about her face, her lips slightly parted, her body limp against him, she awaited his caress.

Then, as he bent to kiss her and saw the expectant expression about her small, sensuous mouth, he paused at the vision of another man in his place. Was her love anything but lechery? He had never kissed another woman as he had kissed Clarice, but had she not kissed her lover that way—with heavy-lidded, half-closed eyes—a hundred, perhaps a thousand times, before she had ever heard of his own existence? had she not raised her mouth with the same little contented purr to another pair of lips—perhaps clean-shaven, perhaps bearded—just as she was now raising it to his? clung to the body of that other man with the same fierce tenderness with which she was clinging to him? murmured in his ear the same drowsy assurances of everlasting devotion as their heads lay side by side on the same pillow? What credence could he give to her account of that first love affair of hers? And how

did he know it was her first? Perhaps it was only the "first" as a result of which she had borne a child!

She turned white at the look with which he regarded her.

"I've got to think," he repeated.

She watched him, motionless, like a fox in a trap.

"Remember I told you everything, Simon!" she warned him.

"Haven't you worked that for about all it's worth?" he inquired as he released her. She said nothing further in either protest, sorrow, or anger, and they went to bed in silence.

He fell into a hectic sleep in which he dreamed of Clarice, first as a sort of "Blessèd Damozel" and then as a voluptuous naked houri with flaming hair. There were other devils who haunted him—a sleek one, like Davis Pettibone, and a pot-bellied old devil with horns, resembling John Henry Robinson, who beat time with a white-hot fork while a chorus of peasants chanted:

> "Sweet summer breeze, whispering trees,
> Robinson, Myer, and Burr!"

There was a clatter as of a million typewriters, and myriads of parti-colored birds with women's faces fluttered about, nodding and chirping; Mr. Hepper, dressed as a clown, with a red nose, sat at a desk and sobbed, "I am only the Prologue! I am only the Prologue!" A thousand violins were wailing "*Ridi Pagliaccio!*" And somewhere, beyond and above the misty cross-lights he could see Vira and David stretching out their arms to him.

CHAPTER XII

§ 1

Shaving by artificial light in the gloomy bathroom next morning, he felt like a prisoner sentenced for life. Suppose his hand slipped—just enough? It must be very simple, else so many would not elect that way of escape. Where was the jugular—here? Then he realized that the razor was a safety. People did not generally use safety razors for that purpose. He could hear David jumping up and down on the springs of his bed. He must see that the child was properly dressed, given his breakfast, and taken to school. There was no one else to do it! He could not shirk his responsibilities. Life had to go on. Even his life with Clarice! He could never get rid of her! Fate had shackled him to her and turned them loose upon the desert of life—a blighted and arid desert upon which there was no green thing.

Yet as he walked across the park, with David trotting beside him, felt the warmth of the small hand in his, and kissed him good-bye at the door of the school, he perceived that life was not entirely a desert. Life had given him something. Queer! You gave and you got. Some good had come of Clarice's sin, if it had been a sin —and, most astonishing of all, to *him!* He now loved this child of another man as if it were his own.

The Honorable John Henry Robinson was feeling more than ordinarily chipper.

"Good morning, Simon, my boy! Sit down! Sit down! Well, things are moving! I've just had a letter from Judge Furman, as attorney for the executors, asking for a conference in the Hammersly case. That means they

want to settle, of course! Now, you know the judge on a more personal basis than the rest of us. He has a high opinion of you, and he'll pay more attention to you than to me. In a word, I want you to undertake the negotiations. It's a good chance to show what you can do along that line. Besides, it's your case. I've telephoned him that you are at his disposal."

"When does he want to see me?"

"This afternoon at two-thirty. Don't commit yourself to anything. Just feel him out. But be sure and give the impression that you have absolute confidence in the case, and that victory for the contestants is a foregone conclusion. You might even drop a hint that some of the other charities have already made overtures looking toward a compromise. It won't do any harm, anyway. Tell him there isn't the slightest doubt, from what our experts tell us, that the testatrix had senile dementia."

"But they haven't had a chance to express any opinion on the evidence as yet, have they?" asked Simon.

"Oh, yes. Doctor Hunziker has given a preliminary diagnosis to that effect. I outlined the old lady's symptoms to him by letter. She was a 'senile dement' with an advanced case of mysophobia."

"What else shall I tell him?"

"You might show him the affidavits of a couple of our strongest witnesses—the ones telling how the old lady was always running around with a chamois skin, rubbing the arms of the chairs and the door-bell—and boiling her money. Whatever else may happen, we can't fall down on mysophobia. If he asks who our experts are, just mention Hunziker and Kelly and Wasgatt and Spinnelli—he'll recognize the names. By the way, I hear Furman's niece is working for you! Can you rely on her not to communicate our evidence to her uncle?"

"Why, of course! She's the soul of honor!" Simon indignantly repudiated the imputation.

Mr. Robinson seemed disappointed.

"I was rather hoping," he said, "that she might be one of those indiscreet young ladies who sometimes try to help along their family connection by carrying tales. If you had any suspicion of that sort it would be the easiest thing in the world to run in an affidavit from an imaginary witness. She'd be sure to pick out the worst to show her uncle. I've done that more than once when I suspected a leak in the stenographic department—gave 'em more than they were paying for."

Simon experienced a sudden itch to get his fingers into the cords of John Henry Robinson's neck.

"Do you mean that, if I had reason to think my secretary was carrying information to the other side, we should supply her with false information for that purpose?"

"Exactly! You pay 'em back in their own coin!"

"There's no use trying it in this instance!" retorted Simon.

"Well, it's worth bearing in mind," Mr. Robinson assured him. "You'll find it'll come in handy some day. It's just like war, you know. They did that all the time with the German spies—filled 'em up with a lot of guff about the movements of our troops and so forth." He regarded Simon with benignity. "You certainly have made good, my dear fellow! Let me see, how long is it since you came to New York?"

"It's about four years," answered Simon, "since I first had the honor of meeting you in this very room!"

It was, in fact, not only the very room, but the very chair, in which he had sat and listened to Mr. Robinson's biannual address on "How to Succeed," and scrunched

Otto's toe! The sunlight was pouring through the Wall Street windows in just the same way, illuminating the pictures of Lord Eldon, Chief Justice Marshall, and Justice William H. Taft, that hung upon the wall. And now, quite unexpectedly, as Simon looked from the friendly countenance of the great lawyer to that of the shrewd little bald-headed attorney below, with his mutton-chop whiskers, he began to laugh. It was involuntary —as automatic as the hiccoughs. If humor lay in the incongruous, certainly the incongruity between Mr. Justice Taft and the Hon. John Henry Robinson was enough to make a horse laugh, let alone a disillusioned and broken-hearted young lawyer.

"Ha-ha-ha!" echoed Mr. Robinson, for Simon's laugh was infectious. "What's the joke?"

Simon checked his laughter.

"I was just looking at that picture of Justice Taft!" he explained. "It always makes me laugh!"

He continued laughing hysterically, as he walked along the corridor leading from Mr. Robinson's to the main office.

Through the open door of the meeting-room he could hear Burr cajoling a bunch of stockholders with a story about a negro exhorter who told his congregation: "'An' de Lawd he jes' pressed de button an' summerized Levi'! —Now, gentlemen, I propose to 'press de button'—" Myer, across the hall, was yammering threateningly at his secretary. White-cuffed girl stenographers were hurrying in and out of the offices lining the passage, each cell marked with the name of the galley-slave within: Mr. Maddix. Mr. Aarons. Mr. Crandall. Mr. Burdick. Mr. Walsh. Mr. Oppenheimer. Mr. Smythe. Mr. Levy. Mr. Johnson. Mr. Mallon. Mr. Magnus! He wondered if Mrs. Magnus was still going to the movies and finding

them "foney." Ha-ha-ha! He passed the door of Mr. Hepper's room. "You gotta make a motion to re-settle that order. They'll try to make us pay costs! Tell Jones—" A long, long way to Flushing! Ha-ha-ha! "*Io sono il Prologo!*"

He quartered the outer office past the "spotter" and the time-clock, the bell-hops, the room-clerk, the Federal Reserve Bank, and the rows of leather chairs upon which the waiting clients were sitting. "Here, boy! Show Mr. Sanger in to Mr. Oppenheimer!" Ha-ha-ha! "Going to leave us, Mrs. Higgleby? Sorry to hear that! Hope you'll come again sometime. Please leave what money you have at the counter. Thank you. Boy! Show this lady to the elevator! And if the elevator isn't there, push her into the shaft or kick her down the stairs!" Ha-ha-ha! He overtook files of human camels carrying their loads of papers, volumes of "CYC"—"Quackenbush on Damages"—"Bishop on Marriage and Divorce." Marriage and divorce! Ha-ha-ha! "*Ridi Pagliaccio! Ridi Pagliaccio!*"

§ 2

There was a sob, like that of Canio, in his laughter as he threw open the door of his office. Vira was at her desk. She looked at him anxiously.

"What are you laughing at, Simon? Are you feeling well?"

"I'm all right," he said. "I was just thinking how funny everything is!"

Her face lost some of its concern.

"Can I share in the joke?"

Simon came over to the machine, on which her fingers were still poised. He noticed how white and shapely they

were, how delicate her wrists, how erectly she carried her head. There was breeding in every line of her.

"I don't know that there's anything to be gained by telling you—but I will. You'd never guess in a thousand years. Old Robinson's just proposed that I should plant a forged affidavit in with the others in the Hammersly case, on the chance that you'd give a copy to your uncle!"

Her eyes flashed and her fists snapped together.

"The horrid old brute!"

"Naturally I wanted to choke him! Instead, I explained to him, to his obvious regret, that you were a decent woman! It's a great world, Vira, isn't it?"

He stood looking down at her grimly, his big mouth in a whimsical, bitter curve.

"I almost wish I had choked him. I'd about as soon hang for murder as be imprisoned for life!"

Every spark of animation had left his face, which looked old and yellow. He sat down on the table, his shoulders dejected, his long fingers twisting nervously.

"I came near—no, I won't say that!—I thought of—ending the whole thing this morning. I don't suppose I would have—ever would under any circumstances—but, as it happened, the razor was a safety and——"

"Oh, Simon!" she cried. "Simon!"

"What finished me was that business last night at the opera with Clarice! It wasn't so much her actual deception as the light it threw on her character. You wouldn't understand unless you knew——"

"I do know, Simon! I've always known. I think you've been perfectly wonderful. You don't know how I admire—and—and respect you!"

There were tears in her eyes. He lifted her hands to his lips and kissed each in turn. In that instant he felt

for her something that he had never felt for any woman save for his mother. "Then it's all right!" he said in a broken voice.

"You do look so dreadfully, Simon! Can't you go away for a rest somewhere?"

"No, Vira! I've got to stay and fight this out. My life's a mess. This morning when I woke up I didn't see how I could go on. We're so absolutely different, she and I! Honestly, Vira, I don't feel as if I knew her at all! I don't know where I stand. She doesn't seem to have any idea of truth whatever. Anyhow, I know I don't love her any more. I don't see how I can go on living with her any more! She's ruined my life! She's kept me from realizing my ideals! Do you suppose I'd ever have stayed in this beastly office if it hadn't been for her? Do you suppose I'd have given up working on my book? Do you suppose I'd have spent half my time playing bridge and yapping at a lot of pouter pigeons with dyed hair, while she tried to vamp their husbands? You bet I wouldn't. I had some ideals when I started out. It's just as dad said: If you play square you get it in the neck. Look how fair I played with her! I gave her the benefit of every doubt. And see what happened to me. I made myself believe she was fine in spite of everything. I don't think so any longer. I don't believe there is anything fine about her. But I'm tied to her for life! She's got a strangle-hold on me! There's no justice in it! Talk about human rights! Talk about freedom! Have I got to live with a woman like that all my days? It's a fine conception of liberty that sentences a man to life imprisonment, simply for being decent!"

He gripped her hands tight.

"When Robinson made that suggestion about the false affidavit this morning I was so angry I could have

killed him. Yet I knew all the time that there were women like that, and that Clarice was one of them. She and old Robinson are just about on a par! They're not our kind of people, Vira."

He leaned forward, pressing her hands to his breast.

"I couldn't have gone on these last few months if it hadn't been for you, Vira! You're the kind of woman I ought to have married! You *are* the woman I ought to have married! O, God, Vira! She's keeping me from you—will keep me from you forever, unless——"

She started to her feet and withdrew her hands.

"Stop, Simon! You mustn't! Clarice is your wife! You've got to be fair with her!"

"After the way she has lied to me? I wouldn't trust her around the corner! She isn't worth your little finger! I tell you I'm through with her. I hate her. I loathe the life she makes me lead. I hate everything she admires most. We're spiritual strangers! I swear I'll never live with her again. She tricked me——"

"Simon!"

She raised her hand in protest. She was paler than ever, her eyes more luminous.

"Listen, Simon! It's terribly hard for me to say this. I'm so sorry for you! You know how fond I am of you and how I admire you! And part of it—a lot of it—is due to your treatment of Clarice. I'd give anything in the world to see you happy. But you've got to be fair to her. She didn't trick you. On the contrary, she told you everything about herself. You knew what she was —had done, I mean! You married her with your eyes open. You can't cast her off just because she's a little different from what you thought. She loves you!"

"*She!* That woman!"

"Yes, in her own way," she insisted, "not yours, perhaps—nor mine. But she's your wife. You mustn't

blame her for everything that's happened. You're responsible for a great deal of it yourself. You needn't have come into this firm of lawyers. Otto told me about that speech Mr. Robinson made to you all. You ought to have known from that what you were getting into. Still—you came! Then you married—unwisely, let us admit; but you needn't have conformed to Clarice's ideas or allowed her to interfere with your destiny. You didn't stand to your guns. That's the trouble. You've temporized. You've tried to blow hot and cold at the same time. And you can't. You both started fair enough. She told you about her past and you agreed to forget it. She was just as fine as you were about that—every bit! Of course you acted precipitously. You might not have married her, if you'd waited—but you preferred not to wait. Then you found out that you had invested her with imaginary qualities—just the opposite of the ones she had. It isn't anything really against her, or any justification for abandoning her, that she's ambitious, that she wants a social recognition she never has had and thinks herself entitled to, that she wants you to make a financial success. That's the only kind of success she knows anything about! There's no reason why she should have to adopt your particular ideals, or ambitions, or desires. And her faults are not very important. She's amiable. She's clever. She wants to help you in her own way. She'd make a perfect wife for some man who wanted what she wanted—like that Mr. Thorn, for instance! Her deceptions aren't very vital. They're not meannesses—they oughtn't to overbalance the one big truth she told you when you married her and which she might have concealed!"

"But Vira! Dearest Vira!" he pleaded. Again she forbade him.

"No, Simon. The one great protection a woman has

is her right to demand that the man she marries shall keep his contract with her and not cast her off because she may turn out to be different from what he thought. You married her for better or for worse, and now, just because it's worse, you have no right to break your word. You've got to stick to her no matter what it costs you. You haven't any right to think of yourself alone. If you leave her, her life would be ruined, as much as you say yours is now. You're both victims of a terrible misfortune. You're both to be pitied. You've got to be a loyal husband to her——"

"I'll never live with her again, so help me God!" he interrupted. "I've nothing left in the world but you, Vira!"

She shook her head.

"You've got David and you've got your work! You've got your book."

"My work! This cat case? What does it all amount to! As for my book, I never get a chance to work on it!"

She pointed to the row of volumes in the corner.

"It's waiting for you. I've re-typed the whole manuscript through 'The Emancipation of Women.'"

"I'm more interested in the emancipation of men!" he growled.

"Don't you believe in it any longer?"

"I don't know what I believe!"

"At any rate, you want me to go on admiring and respecting you?"

"More than anything. I couldn't live without that."

"There's only one way out for you, Simon. It's what you should have done from the very first. Live your own life! There's no reason why you should adopt her ambitions and ideals—any more than she should yours. You have your vision—your own theory of success. You

can be a great man if you choose, Simon, and she has no right to interfere with you. It's up to her to play whatever game you want, so long as she accepts your support. You're the man, not she. If you prefer to write instead of practising law, it's up to her to help you the best she can. If she won't, that's a different matter. There's nothing to prevent you from sitting down at that desk over there right now and going on with your 'History of Human Liberty'!"

"A lot of heart I've got for it!" he exclaimed. "What's the use of all these heroics, Vira?" He looked at her hungrily. "We can only live once. I need you, Vira! I need you so much! Don't let her spoil our lives!"

She turned away with a gesture of despair.

"She can't spoil either of our lives, Simon," she said faintly. "What would spoil them is—our doing anything unfair—and—and selfish—without any real excuse!"

He sprang toward her.

"Vira!" he cried piteously. "Say you'll stick by me! You must know how I love you! I——"

There was a step outside, the door opened, and one of the bell-hops entered.

"Please, sir! Mr. Myer wants to see you at once!" he said.

Simon followed him.

§ 3

Simon was busy with Myer the rest of the morning, preparing for his forthcoming interview with Judge Furman, and when he returned to his office Vira had already gone to lunch. He hung about aimlessly, and, as

she had not come back at one o'clock, went over for a bite at the Down-Town Association, where he remained until it was time to go to "Uncle Isaac's" office. Old leather and soft coal—an atmosphere of leisurely self-respect—how restful it all was!

It was four years since he had been there—the time the judge had nearly caught him on that "higher-law-than-the-Constitution" stuff. He'd like to take that up with him again some day! And he wished he could talk to the old man about his chapter on "Modern Concepts." Wasn't there already in the decisions—even within the last six months—a noticeable tendency to swing backward? Had sociologic law, except in the realm of compulsory insurance perhaps, shot its bolt?

He was leaning on his elbows studying the photographs of Garry and Vira on the judge's desk when the latter came in.

"Sorry to keep you waiting!" said "Uncle Isaac." "But Pepperill dragged me into a case at the last minute and insisted on my arguing a motion for an adjournment." He seated himself in his swivel-chair. "How are you getting on? You don't look very fit!"

"I've got the 'Lawyer's Blues,' I guess."

"Well, we all get them! How about this Hammersly case? Have you looked into it?"

"I'm looking into it right now."

"Uncle Isaac" pushed a box of cigars toward Simon and helped himself.

"I drew that will," he remarked, striking a match. "In fact I knew Miss Hammersly for years. It's a relief to find you in the case, instead of Robinson or Myer, for we can talk to one another frankly. You'll have to abandon that contest—Miss Hammersly was absolutely competent to make a will—as competent as I am."

"I haven't gone very deeply into the case as yet," answered Simon. "Didn't she have mysophobia?"

"What if she did!" retorted "Uncle Isaac." So had my mother! So have thousands of old women! Every woman hates dirt! It has no bearing on her testamentary capacity. No one knows better than a woman's own lawyer whether she was sane or not. I give you my word, Simon, there is nothing whatever in this case."

"I'm credibly informed that she had senile dementia" persisted Simon.

"Senile dementia!" shouted "Uncle Isaac." "She was no more senile than you are! Who says so?"

Simon felt like crawling under the table.

"Mr. Robinson's experts," he replied diffidently.

"Experts? Who in the name of Julius Cæsar are they?" roared the old lawyer.

"I haven't seen any of them myself, but Mr. Robinson mentioned Doctor Hunziker——"

"Hunziker! That crook! Come, come, Simon! You must know who Hunziker is?"

"I don't know anything about him. I never heard of him before this morning."

"He's notorious—one of the most dangerous men in the medical profession! You simply can't cross-examine him! He hops around like a flea. So Robinson has retained Hunziker! Well—that's—bad!"

The old man shook his head.

"He's retained others, also," Simon hastened to inform him.

"Naturally! Hunziker never goes on the stand without his bodyguard—Kelly, Wasgatt, Spinnelli, Rosenbloom—I know 'em all! Well, my boy, if it has gone as far as that, it is useless for us to talk further. But it's

a damn shame! Moreover, it's a greater shame for you to be connected with the case."

"I think that the heirs would consider favorably an offer of settlement," hazarded Simon, hardly knowing what else to say, since the interview had turned out so unexpectedly.

"Settlement? Settle a blackmail suit? Compromise a baseless attempt to defeat the wishes of a gentle and charitable old lady who may have been slightly eccentric, but who was quite capable of carrying on her own affairs and of being a delightful social companion? If your friend Robinson thinks he sees a chance of forcing us to buy off the heirs, he's mistaken! He'll not get a cent. I'd rather have my clients lose their legacies than submit to blackmail. It wouldn't be fair to Miss Hammersly. She wanted her charities to have the money, and they have no right to share it with a lot of disgruntled relatives who have received enough already. No, go back to your office! Tell John Henry Robinson that we have 'millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute'!"

Simon was thoroughly uncomfortable. He had not realized up to this time the extent to which he valued Judge Furman's opinion. He now saw that without it he would prefer not to go on practising law. Yet he had a well-defined duty to the firm who employed and paid him.

"I shall report what you say to Mr. Robinson," he remarked quietly, reaching for his hat. Judge Furman hesitated.

"I'm sorry I spoke so violently," he said. "After all, you're only doing what you're told. However, the innocent often have to suffer with the guilty, if they're found in their company." He chewed on his cigar. "I wish

you hadn't gone into that firm, my boy! I don't suppose I ought to talk as I have about your associates, but I have a real interest in you. You're too fine for that outfit. You must have seen enough in the four years that you've been there to realize that they're a lot of damned commercialists. Let me talk to you as a friend and then forget that I've said anything. This is for your ear alone. It has nothing to do with the case at bar. I'm speaking as an old man to a young one—parental advice. That office of yours is nothing but a money-making machine. Old Robinson is a cross between a highwayman and a mountebank. He's a superannuated jackass and a menace to the bar. Of course they're glad to have you there—for, apart from your ability, it lends respectability to their outfit. But you can't stay there much longer without being contaminated yourself, or at least falling under suspicion. If I were you I'd get out—no matter what it cost!"

"I guess I did make a mistake," admitted Simon miserably as he got up. His eye wandered to the picture of Vira. "More than one!"

"Uncle Isaac" reached over and patted his arm.

"I know, my boy! I'm sincerely sorry for you. But don't be discouraged. Some day you're going to write your book and be famous! And I hope you'll be happy!"

When Simon repeated his message from Judge Furman to Mr. Robinson, the latter showed no sign of discouragement.

"Naturally he has to take that position at first!" he asserted cheerfully. "He'll sing a different tune when the case gets on the calendar for trial. The judge is a good bluffer!"

"But he says he knows Miss Hammersly was competent to make a will," persisted Simon. "I should think

any jury would be apt to sustain the will on his testimony alone."

Mr. Robinson leaned back in his chair.

"That's where we have him!" he chuckled. "No matter what he knows, it won't do him a particle of good—for the law doesn't permit him to testify!"

§ 4

Although Simon had managed to control himself during Myer's steam-riveted interview, and to preserve at least his outward equanimity while the firm was under the fire of "Uncle Isaac's" withering excoriation, his nerves were jumping when he returned to his own office. It had been a bad twenty-four hours! He must have a chance to think. Vira was right—at least about his leading his own life. He'd not reopen the discussion. Perhaps she'd feel differently in a day or two.

She got up from her machine immediately upon his entrance and followed him into the other room.

"I have been thinking everything over, since this morning," she said. "I don't think I ought to stay here any longer, Simon. Would it inconvenience you if I went at once?"

He swung upon her incredulously.

"How do you mean—go?"

"I mean resign my place as your secretary."

"What nonsense! Of course it would inconvenience me most terribly!"

"I might come for one more day, just to finish up—but I shall have to go after that. I think it would be best if I came to-morrow morning to get my things, but didn't stay. Don't you think so?"

"But Vira! You mustn't resign. I can't possibly get along without you!"

"Oh, yes, you can! There are thousands of girls better than I am." She paused. "To-morrow morning, then?"

Was this all her friendship amounted to?

"This is a hell of a trick!" he cried. "I thought you were my friend! Oh, Vira! For God's sake, don't desert me!"

He slumped into the chair at his desk, and, burying his head in his arms, burst into tears. He felt rather than heard her come. Next instant her arms were about him, her cheek against his temple.

"Simon! Simon, dear! Don't cry! Don't you see why I have to go?"

He turned and crushed her to him.

"Vira! Darling!" he sobbed. "I can't let you go! I can't! You're all I have! It will kill me to lose you!"

She suffered his kisses for a second or two, then gently disengaged herself.

"You're not going to lose me, Simon!" she said. "I'll always be there if you need me. But of course I can't work here in your office any longer. So long as you are married to Clarice it wouldn't be fair to her. Good-bye, Simon. God bless you, dear!"

The tears were streaming down her face as she bent and kissed him on his forehead.

"Simon!—Beloved!"

He caught her to him once more, imbedding his face in her breast. She tore herself away. He heard the inner door slam behind her—then the outer.

He sat there alone a long time. When he had achieved enough calmness to look about him, it was quite dark.

His eyes were smarting, his cheeks incrusted with salt, and when he tried to walk his knees were wabbly.

He went to the wash-room, there encountering Mr. Hepper. The chief clerk was mixing something in a flat tumbler, with supreme solemnity.

"Lil' libation to Bacchus," he informed Simon confidentially. "'When half-gods go, the gods arrive,' or sump'n generally—in words, form, or substansh—to that effec'. Ole Robinson went off at five, an' ole Bacchus came on duty. 'Ave a nip?"

Simon took a nip. So did Mr. Hepper. Then Mr. Hepper mixed another.

"They say half a loaf is better'n no bread," asserted Mr. Hepper, "but same isn't true of whi-hisky. Half a drink is less'n a drink, 'cause you miss other half—otherwise not. Relativity!—Einstein theory! The great prinshiple is al'ys drink 'nough—to forget!"

Simon washed the tears off his face.

"Yes?" he inquired above his towel. "What is it you want to forget?"

Mr. Hepper held the tumbler to the light and studied it critically.

"My other half!" he replied. "I don't mean Mrs. Hepper, either. She's all right—'s well-meanin' woman. I mean the half of the—hp!—drink that no man ever gets. Un'erstan' me? The half of life none of us ever lives! Well, here's to old Robinson, God damn him!"

Mr. Hepper drained the contents of the tumbler without taking breath.

"Goo' night!" he said, replacing the tumbler in his pocket and starting toward the door. At the threshold he turned and paused unsteadily.

"'Look in my face,'" he quoted sadly, "'my name

is Might-have-been; I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell!'"

"And you're another!" remarked Simon, gazing at himself in the smeared-looking glass above the wash-stand after Hepper had gone. "You're another, Simon Kent, another 'Might-have-been'!"

He wondered if there was anybody, anywhere in the world, who had lived a full life! Weren't they all just a miserable collection of Heppers? Was there anybody for whom the saddest words in the language were not, "Too late"? Fate had "played him for a sucker" like the rest of the Hepper family. Well, what was he going to do about it? Vira was right. He must carry on. Clarice or no Clarice, he must lead his own life! Follow his own star! And then there was David. He could not desert David! He looked at his watch and found that it was already past the child's bedtime. No use going home to sulk away the evening with his wife. Why not take a crack at his manuscript again?

He walked back to his office, lit a cigarette, and surveyed the corner table where Vira had arranged his books. His eye ran over the well-worn, familiar volumes —old friends they were—Fourier—the "Contrat Social" —Mill—Locke—Owen.

One by one he glanced through them. They were just as he had brought them down from the apartment in August, and he began to arrange them in their proper order for reference. One, bound in paper, seemed unfamiliar—"The World Almanac." He did not recall ever having owned one, but there was a mark in it and he turned to the place. "Annulment," read the top of the page—"Laws governing annulment of marriage in various States." Puzzled, for he had made no investigation of marriage laws in connection with his book, he looked

at the mark and found it to be a folded letter. He opened it.

"ISAAC FURMAN
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR-AT-LAW
WALL STREET
NEW YORK CITY

November 29, 1922.

Miss Clarice Hungerford,
220 West 58th St.,
New York City."

His eye leaped down the text.

"DEAR MISS HUNGERFORD:

Since your call last Friday morning I have had more time to examine into the question of law about which you asked my opinion. Further examination of the cases only serves to strengthen my belief that to conceal the facts from any person with whom you contemplated marriage would be exceedingly dangerous. It is quite true that in general the courts will refuse to annul a marriage on the ground of fraud unless it goes to the very fundamentals or essentials of the marital relation; and deceit or misrepresentation covering a party's health, character, wealth, social position, previous history or habits, is not sufficient for this purpose. In New York State, however, the rule has been broadly laid down that *every misrepresentation of a material fact, made with intent to induce the other party to enter into the marriage contract, and without which it would not have been made, authorizes its annulment* c.f.d: Di Lorenzo v. Di Lorenzo 174 N. Y. 467, 67 N. E. 63, 95 Am. St. Rep. 609, 63 L. R. A. 92 [*reversing* 71 N. Y. App. Div. 509, 75 N. Y. Suppl. 879 (*reversing* 34 Misc. 692, 70 N. Y. Suppl. 1012)] holding that where defendant induces plaintiff to marry her by false representations that he is the father of her bastard child, it is obtaining his consent to the marriage by fraud, within the meaning of the statute, and authorizes the dissolution of the marriage. This is the strongest decision against you and of course it is not directly in point. On the other hand, it has been very generally held that false representations as to previous chastity are not ground for decreeing annulment of the marriage, and in Glean v. Glean (70 N. Y. App. Div. 576, 75 N. Y. Suppl. 622) where the husband concealed the

fact that he had unlawfully cohabited for several years with another woman and had several children by her, it was held not such fraud as to vitiate the marriage, but it is doubtful whether this decision could be sustained in view of the broad rule laid down in Di Lorenzo v. Di Lorenzo, supra, and it has been held in this State that where a woman about to marry pretends to be chaste, and conceals from her prospective husband the fact that she is then pregnant by another man, the concealment is such a fraud as to justify the annulment of the marriage (Wightman v. Wightman, 4 Johns. Ch. 343).

After a rather careful review of the authorities I feel convinced that the safer course is to make a frank disclosure of the facts.

Trusting that this will give you the information desired, I am,

Very truly yours,

OW/SSM OTTO WIEGAND.

The table and row of books made scrolls in front of him.

"Safer course to pursue!" So she hadn't told him in order to be honest, but for fear lest some day he should learn the truth and have the marriage annulled by law. In retrospect he saw himself, consumed with love for her, desirous of possessing her, able, had he so willed, to possess her, but proposing marriage as the only honorable course. He recalled their evening at the "movies," the crude story of the village girl defrauded of her innocence, and his defense of her. Once more he held Clarice in his arms in the Fifty-eighth Street apartment, felt her bosom pressed against him, his lips on hers, heard her halting confession that she had had a lover. Again he roamed the deserted streets, soul-sick at the thought of her as the mistress of another or of others, tortured by imagination, yet ultimately convinced that she must be honest since she had been willing to hazard her chances of marriage in order that he might know the truth.

Now he knew that she had been animated by an en-

tirely different motive—caution, not honor. In all likelihood, as soon as she felt confident that he would propose marriage, she had gone to Judge Furman for advice and had been turned over by him to Otto, who had written her the letter. She had acted on the opinion contained in it, taking the opportunity to make a virtue of necessity! All was grist to her mill! That was why she had been in such a hurry to marry him, once she knew that he and Otto were friends; that was what Otto had meant when he said he knew something which he couldn't tell. She had kept the letter, for reference probably, and the copy of the almanac, into which she had slipped it, had been mixed with his books in the hall bookcase. Hypocritical, lying jade! She had hoodwinked him! Traded on his decency and sense of chivalry! Had committed him to his theories of the rights of women and then sprung her trap!

And then Simon became conscious that he had no longer any problem. Everything was settled. There was nothing more to think about. In a sort of spiritual clairvoyance he perceived that he was morally free of her. He owed her nothing now! He was finished, now and forever, with Clarice!

§ 5

Clarice was waiting for him in the drawing-room when he reached the apartment, and had put on her prettiest frock for the occasion.

"Hello, darling!" she called. "I was so afraid something might have happened, to keep you down-town! Buckley has sent us some ducks. What sort of a day have you had?"

He did not go to her, but remained standing where he had hung up his coat.

"So-so!" he answered. "I just want to take a squint at Davie. I'll be back in a minute."

He walked down the hall to the child's room, and, opening the door, allowed the light from outside to fall across the bed. The child was lying on his side, with one arm thrown over his head, in profound slumber, the top button of his tiny blue pyjamas open and disclosing his thin little chest. The nose was straight and clearly chiselled like his mother's, but his hair was dark and his lashes lay long and black on his clear olive skin. At least he had been the gainer by their mistake. If they had not married what would have become of him? He could hear Clarice shaking the cocktails. It was clear that she had determined to act as if nothing had occurred—had planned a pretty scene of reconciliation after what she chose to regard as merely a lovers' quarrel. Well, whatever happened, he wouldn't give up David!

"He looks all right!" he said, entering the drawing-room without kissing her.

"Of course he's all right! What made you think he wasn't?" She poured out the cocktails. "Aren't you going to kiss me, dear?"

Her beauty, her solicitude for his comfort, moved him not at all. Nevertheless, he bent and kissed her.

"Dinner ready?"

"It's been ready for over half an hour! I thought you'd never come! Are you tired?"

"Nothing to speak of."

"Well, let's go in! I just had a telephone call from Ava. She wanted to know how you were and sent you her love. She said she had a wonderful time at the opera last night!"

He made no reply. Was she being wilfully obtuse? Or was it a challenge?

The dinner had been chosen with a subtle regard for his preferences. Clarice prattled on merrily, innocently determined to make it a real party. He ate in silence, hardly listening. She was no more present, so far as he was concerned, than a goldfish in an aquarium. The one-sided conversation dwindled—dropped.

"I can't say that you're very sociable this evening!" she remarked.

Simon pushed back his chair without waiting for the coffee.

"Look here, Clarice! I'm sorry not to be more responsive, but there's no use in putting up any more of this bluff. Our marriage is a failure."

The sudden fading of her gold-red color gave her a green look.

"A failure, Simon! I think it's a tremendous success in every way. Look how you're getting on! How we've both got on!"

"We're getting nowhere!"

"We know half the smart people already. Another winter and I'll know all of them. If we had enough money to entertain properly, they'd all come to us now. And we will have it soon! You'll make a lot out of that will case. There's nothing we can't get—in time! Everybody speaks of you as a coming man."

"I'm not coming—I'm going."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm sick of the whole business. I want to lead my own life. If you are willing to—" he spoke with calmness—"I want you to divorce me."

"Divorce you——!"

"Yes—divorce me. There's no reason why we should live together any longer."

She was white now. This was no utterance in hot blood!

"Don't—don't you—love me any more?"

"No," he said drily, "I don't."

"Have I done anything?" The question was sufficiently naïve for him to feel satisfied that she hadn't.

"Not of the sort you mean. It isn't what you've done, but what you are!"

Her eyes lighted.

"I remember your saying the same thing when you wanted me to marry you!"

"I did," he admitted. "The trouble was I didn't know what you were."

"It wasn't my fault you didn't. I told you everything there was to know."

"But *why* did you tell me?" he asked.

"Because it was the honest thing to do," she answered. "I didn't want to marry you under false pretenses. I wish now I hadn't told you, if it's made you stop loving me!"

"So you told me just to be honest, did you?"

"Yes—so you'd know everything there was to know."

She was as cool as he was, but tense as a crouching leopard. Simon took Otto's letter from his pocket and handed it to her.

"Do you recognize that?" he asked.

She did not weaken. Was she superb or merely "dumb"?

"Certainly I recognize it. It's the letter Otto Wiegand wrote me after I consulted him as to whether I ought to tell you about David."

"When did you consult him?"

"As soon as I saw that you were in love with me and would surely ask me to marry you. I didn't know what to do and it seemed awfully important, and so I thought I'd better get some legal advice."

"And you only told me about David as a result of the advice contained in that letter?"

She smoothed the edge of her skirt where it fell across her knee.

"Well, it settled it. I couldn't make up my mind before that. You see, I was afraid to tell you, in spite of what you had said. I loved you so much I couldn't stand the thought of losing you! And you meant so much to me in other ways, besides all that lovely part! Marrying you was a chance to get back on my feet and start life all over again. I'd rather have told you—naturally—and get it off my chest. Besides, there was always the possibility that if I didn't, you'd learn about it later, somehow, and be sore with me. So for a while I decided that I'd take a chance and tell you everything. Then, when I saw that you were actually on the point of proposing to me, I got scared. I was terribly in love with you. I am still, Simon. I always will be, I guess. You've got a queer kind of charm that appeals to me. Anyhow, I just couldn't face the chance of your walking out on me, and I made up my mind to stand pat. Then one day I read something in the paper about the Supreme Court annulling a marriage because one of the parties hadn't told the other about having had a child. It worried me. Judge Furman was our attorney and so I naturally went down to consult him as to what I had better do. He happened to be busy and called in Mr. Wiegand. There were several reasons why I thought it would be better not to tell you—in fact, it didn't seem at all necessary, in view of your opinions, and there was no way of knowing how the knowledge might affect you. But when Otto wrote me that, if I concealed the facts, you might be able to annul our marriage, of course that decided it.

He stared at her dumfounded.

"And you call that telling me because you wanted to be honest and fair?"

"Why, of course!"

"By God, Clarice, you're incredible!" he expostulated, wondering if her misunderstanding were not possibly a pretense. "Don't you see—don't you see what a rotten trick you played me?"

"No," she answered. "I told you, didn't I? What more could you have asked?"

"Don't you see that you took advantage of my love and confidence to make me believe that you were something different from what you were? You call that love! It was the lowest kind of a lie."

She did not flinch.

"I told you. I don't see what difference it makes what my motive was. You're just making a big fuss over nothing! Naturally I wanted to put the best construction I could on it. Who wouldn't? What's the use of knocking oneself? You didn't expect me to tell you every little sin I ever committed before I met you! I didn't ask *you* anything! I don't suppose you were any white-robed angel, either! What's the matter? Do you think I've been letting Thorn get gay with me? Well, you can rest easy. I haven't. I've been a good and faithful wife and tried to help you along in every way. Look what I've done for you in only a year! You're getting four times as much salary from Robinson, Myer & Burr as when I married you. I was afraid something was going to happen when you acted so queer last night after the opera! I don't know why you should take it this way."

"I don't suppose you ever *will* know, Clarice. I can't explain. You have to feel these things. I don't know whether you love me or not. But I *do* know that I don't

love you any longer. I'm absolutely through. I'll never live with you again, if I can help it. It wouldn't be right for me to. There's nothing to be said. I just know it. That's all there is to it. The sooner you divorce me the better."

That he spoke without emotion made what he said the more terrible to her.

"But Simon!" she cried. "You can't mean you really want to get a divorce! You wouldn't do anything like that! Leave me all alone when I love you so!"

"I want a divorce!" he repeated stubbornly. She saw that he meant it.

"But I haven't done anything, Simon! You haven't a single ground—now that I told you about David. It wouldn't be fair. It wouldn't be like you, Simon. You wouldn't be happy to do a thing like that. It would be too heartless and unjust. I couldn't stand it! It would kill me!" She threw herself upon the *chaise longue*.

He did not go near her.

"Why don't you love me?" she sobbed. "Other men seem to like me, all right! But you're the only one I love, Simon! You're the only one I've ever really loved! Don't leave me! Don't abandon me! Oh, you couldn't! If you did I'd kill myself! It would be like murder, Simon!"

He was moved, but her appeal evoked no response from him. When her outburst had spent itself he said:

"It's no use, Clarice! It just has to be. Perhaps we'd better not talk about it any more. But I'm done. I'm going to move my bed into David's room!"

"Into David's room!"

"Yes. There's plenty of spare space."

His practical carrying out of his resolution drama-

tized the situation for her more than anything else could have done.

"Simon!" she begged in a voice hardly articulate. "Simon! Ple-ease! Ple-ease don't do that! If I've done anything—the least little thing to make you angry, just tell me and I'll never do it again! Only just tell me! I'll be any way you want. Give me a chance! You ought to, you know. You can't just throw a woman out like that. I know you like to write—and don't like going out. I suppose I've been selfish about it. Well, we won't go out any more—at least we'll go just as little as you care to. And you can write every evening! We'll change this room into a sort of library for you to work in. You remember how nicely you used to work down at University Place? We'll have it just like that. We'll put a great big table in the middle of the room with all your books on it—not out in the hall! Won't that be nice, dear? You needn't have anybody here to bother you at all. You can be all by yourself if you want to. I'll go out or stay in, just as you prefer. It will be like those dear old times when we were first married!"

She sat up, waiting apprehensively for his verdict.

"I'm sorry, but it's too late, Clarice. I'm dissatisfied—disgusted with my life. I want to live my own way."

She seized upon it eagerly.

"I'll live any way you want! I'll go anywhere you want!"

He shook his head.

"I want a divorce."

Clarice's mouth narrowed; her hands unclasped themselves; her eyes congealed. She became a leopard again.

"Oh, you want a *divorce!*—I see! Nothing else will do! Nothing but a divorce! Don't think you can fool

me! You're in love with that smart little stenographer of yours! You want to get rid of me so you can marry her. Well, what do you take me for? You make me laugh! Do you think I'm the kind, after I've given you a good time and made money for you, to lie down and let you walk all over me? Let you leave me for that snooty little high-hat? Not on your life! You make me sick, with your big talk about not wanting anything! I know what you want all right. You're just like anybody else. You want to marry her because she's a swell. She's got money. She's got social position. I haven't. I'm a nobody. I'm just a Long Island bum. Well, you can't have your society girl! You'll stick to your Long Island bum. I'll never divorce you. You haven't any ground for divorce or annulment, and I'll never give you any! Gee, I'm glad I asked Otto's advice! If I hadn't you might have had me up before the Supreme Court by this time! You'll never get me there now! No, you've got me for life, dearie! And you better make the best of it!" Yellow sparks flashed from her eyes. "Yes, sweetheart, you better make the best of it! I can give you a pretty good time—a pretty good time! But I won't unless you're nice to me! If you get too gay with your little office tart——"

"Shut up!" yelled Simon. He sprang toward Clarice and cupped his hand over her mouth. She struggled to free herself. An undignified and humiliating moment followed.

"Try to speak decently!" he ordered as he released her. "If you say another word about Vira I'll——"

But Clarice would not let go his hands.

"I'm sorry!" she panted. "I'm sorry, Simon! I can't help it. I love you so, Simon! Don't leave me! I'll do anything you ask! Kiss me, Simon!"

But his pity had been transmuted into loathing. Without reply he wrenched his hands away. Otto's letter had fallen upon the floor. He picked it up, stuffed it into his pocket, and walked out. That night he slept on the couch in the drawing-room.

§ 6

Clarice did not sleep. Superficially clever as she was, she had not the intelligence to grasp the imponderable, but vital, elements in the situation. It just couldn't be as Simon said! She knew that she was as honest as most people. She knew that she had been singularly successful in pushing Simon ahead socially and in his profession. She knew that at one time he had been desperately in love with her. All this talk about Otto's letter—this truth-and-honesty stuff—was a mere "stall" to hide the real reason why he had cooled toward her. Another woman! That she could understand. Men changed. Sometimes they liked blondes and sometimes brunettes. A love affair lasted usually no more than a couple of years; marriages, as a rule, from five to ten. But she had known Simon only about fifteen months, and no man had ever been more in love with her! Some unseen influence was at work, like that of a planet whose presence manifests itself only through its gravitational effect upon other bodies. Some new and alluring star must have swum into his ken. Vira! This "bunk" about their marriage being a failure—about his wanting to live his own life! Nonsense! That he did not love her any longer, that he was in love with somebody else, and wanted a divorce, she could comprehend. That was in her own field. She must expect to fight for her own. Her instinct had warned her against Vira from the very first.

Unmarried girls, who had everything in the world they wanted, did not work down-town from nine to five in stuffy offices. She ought to have known better than to "stand for it." She ought to have made Simon kick the girl out. If he refused, she could have gone over his head to old Robinson. He'd have cooked the slut's goose for her! After all, she could have turned Vira's employment to social use, if Simon had not spiked her guns! The overshadowing menace—the only real menace—was Vira. Vira was her enemy and she must destroy her. With her out of the way, it would be nothing to cajole Simon into her arms again.

She called up his office and learned that he had gone to court and was not expected back before one. That would give her the chance she wanted to see Vira alone. "I'll put the fear of God into that woman!" she muttered as she rang for a taxi. "If she won't keep her hands off I'll ruin her! I owe her something at that! She thinks she's better than I am? I'll show her!"

Clarice was a familiar figure at Robinson, Myer & Burr's, and was shown at once to Simon's office. Vira was standing in street costume at her desk, putting some papers into a brief-case, and Clarice jumped to the conclusion that she was going to meet Simon somewhere. These home-destroying business women! What chance had a wife whose life was full of domestic duties, against one of these harpies who were always "on the job"?

At the click of the latch Vira turned. A stalking leopardess glided into the room. Vira suspected why Clarice had come, and nerved herself.

"Good morning, Mrs. Kent," she said. "Mr. Kent has gone out."

"I'm not looking for Mr. Kent. Would you mind coming into the inside office for a moment?"

"As you choose." Vira opened the door and allowed Clarice to go in before her. "Will you sit down?" Her calm politeness was infuriating to the older woman.

"I don't need to sit down," she answered, manœuvring so that she was between Vira and the door. "I can say what I want to standing up." Now that they were face to face, her anger against what she regarded as this white-faced young hypocrite reached the boiling-point. "The first thing I want to say is that your putting me in that position the night before last at the opera was a low-down trick. You must have known I'd never met Muriel. Even if I once pretended I had, and you found out I hadn't, you needn't have taken the opportunity to make my husband think that I was a liar. But I'll pay you back some day—perhaps sooner than you think!"

Vira tried to ignore her tone. After all, this was Simon's wife. There was no use making any more trouble for him than was absolutely necessary.

"I had no idea that you had not met your cousin Muriel—if she is your cousin," she answered. "I had no intention of putting you in an embarrassing position —quite the contrary!"

"Humph!" shrugged Clarice. "Tell that to the marines! Anyhow, you did it all right! The other thing is —keep your dirty little paws off my husband!"

A quiver passed over Vira's face which then settled into a masque. She made no reply. Her eyes alone showed her contempt.

"Ptah!" went on Clarice. "You make me sick! You, with your high-falutin' superiority! Trying to set my husband against me! Filling his head with the idea that he's too grand to work like other men! Making him think that I'm not good enough for him! Rotten

little snob! I know what you've been up to! Talk about honesty! It's a scream! You're all a bunch of hypocrites and liars and confidence breakers. How did you learn anything about me except through that holy "Uncle Isaac" of yours? How did Simon find out about Otto's letter to me, unless he or Judge Furman double-crossed me? Either they gave up on me to him direct or one of them told you and you him! A nice lot of traitors you are—with your everlasting twaddle about professional ethics!"

"I don't know what you're talking about. I know nothing of any letter of Otto's!" said Vira.

"How did Simon know about it, then?" retorted Clarice. "How did he know what to look for unless you told him? Where did he get it? Suppose I did ask Otto's legal advice? And suppose he did tell me I'd better admit the truth——"

Vira lifted her head.

"So that was why you told Simon about your child?"

"Naturally! That's no reason why you should poison his mind against me. What the hell difference does it make why I told him about David, so long as I did tell him? You'd have thought to hear him last night that I'd lied to him instead of handing him out the truth. God, you're slick! You'd use any argument, so long as you could get him away from me! I bet you framed that whole business at the opera! If you did, I must say I have to hand it to you! I hand it to you, anyway, for the clever way you've managed to turn him away from me with your innocent schoolgirl airs—pretending you never smoked or went anywhere in Paris, or knew anybody or had done anything. Bah! I bet you've smoked your head off and got tight and played strip poker often

enough, with your own rotten rabbitting Park Avenue bunch! Don't I know what they are? You bet I do! I could tell you things to make you sit up! I know that Hungerford crowd! Well, you'll jolly well keep off my preserves! You leave my husband alone. It's bad enough to try to undermine my influence and make him dissatisfied with his life when he's on the highroad to success. I suppose I'd have to swallow that. But if you think I'm going to sit quiet and let you take him away from me, you're jolly well mistaken, my young lady! I don't know whether you're his mistress or not—yet, but I know what you want——"

Vira recoiled from her as from something leprous.

"Stop!" she cried hysterically. "You must be out of your mind! You're either crazy or you're the wickedest woman in the world. What you're saying is all a lie! I never knew anything about you that everybody else, who knew the Hungerfords, didn't know. I heard your story long before I knew either you or Otto. He never told me anything. Neither did my uncle. He may possibly have mentioned your name, but nothing about your private affairs. I'd known and respected Simon all my life, and when he married you and I found out that he had adopted David, naturally I put two and two together. Simon never said a word to me about you. I gave you credit for having told him the truth. If you didn't tell him because you wanted to be honest, but for some other reason, I feel entirely different about you. It's more consistent with my general impression of your character—and the exhibition of yourself you're making now. I know nothing about Otto's letter except what you have just told me yourself. I've never heard of it until now."

She put her hands to her face.

"As for all the other awful things you've said, I've

never tried to turn Simon against you. It's true I admire and respect him more than any man I know——"

"Yes you do!" sneered Clarice.

Vira clenched her hands.

"And you've done your best to ruin him! He was—he is the finest man I ever met! He wanted to give his life to doing something worth while. Then he came to New York and entered this office. That was his first mistake—a bad one! The war had knocked some of the idealism out of him, I guess. And then he married you. He thought you had the same high ideals as himself. Well, you've tried to turn him into a money-making machine. You've kept him from the work that he loved, you've dragged him around from pillar to post, trying to commercialize his charm and to make business out of your friendships. You've tried to substitute your own ideas of success and a good life for his, but you haven't succeeded in anything but making him miserable. Try as you will, you'll never drag him down to your level. The gulf between you is too great."

The leopard was lashing her tail. She took a stealthy step toward her victim.

"I'll teach you to mind your own business and not go around trying to steal other women's husbands. Don't you suppose I knew all along what you were up to! You came here on purpose for that! You didn't fool me for a minute! Well, now you can get out! Get out or be kicked out! You're not the only one who's got any pull here. Mr. Robinson will do what I ask him. He isn't anxious to have one of his partners known to be carrying on with his stenographer right in the office under his very nose. Oh, I know all about it!"

Clarice clawed at her.

"You'll pack up and get out—*now!* If you don't"—

she thrust her face toward Vira—"I'll smear your name over the front page of every newspaper in the United States! I'll sue you for a million dollars for alienating the affections of my husband and spill the whole dirty story of how a supposedly respectable young society girl —not content with the men she could get in her own crowd—pretended she was a stenographer and wormed her way into a law-office down-town and seduced her employer—stole him away from his wife, the cousin of one of her best friends! You strumpet!" She screamed the words.

Simon, who had entered, was just in time to hear them.

"Get out, Clarice!" he ordered, furiously. "You've done enough harm for one day! Get out before I do something to you! Get out! Do you hear?"

Clarice with a mocking smirk on her face sauntered to the door.

"I see how it is! Well, be as nice to her as you want, Simon! Kiss her, if you want to! Be anything you like to her! Only remember there won't be any divorce in the Kent family. A little scandal, perhaps—but no divorce! I've got you, sweetie, and I'm going to hang on to you. Put that in your pipe and smoke it!"

The door closed behind her.

"My darling! My poor darling!" cried Simon.

Vira shut her eyes and let her cheek fall against his.

"Oh, Simon!" she shuddered. "I don't blame you for anything any longer! What—are we going to do? What are we going to do?"

CHAPTER XIII

§ 1

WHATEVER happens to the world or to ourselves, be it war, fire, bankruptcy, or death, the sun moves steadily and unconcernedly across the sky, until once again it sinks from sight. So each day passes. And after a certain lapse, though it may be with an ache in our hearts, or a hollow in our stomachs, or a deficit in our bank accounts, we do the next thing. So the day slipped by, and the sun set, and the next thing came for Simon—the consultation with the experts, retained in the Hammersly will case, set for that evening. He dressed, as per Mr. Robinson's instructions, in "full fig," with his bedroom door tight shut, while Clarice sat playing solitaire defiantly in the drawing-room. Then he heard David say his prayers, tucked him in, and went forth without a word to his wife. Already he felt as if a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. She had been on top when the crash came, but now their positions seemed to have been reversed. He felt the same way about the law.

"Uncle Isaac's" unglossed indictment had awakened Simon to the first consciousness of the real reputation of Robinson, Myer & Burr, a reputation less something positive than a vague adumbration of evil. They were in the faint slow-moving outer penumbra of moral eclipse. Up to this time Simon had had no evidence that his partners or associates were willing to connive at anything strictly unprofessional. They had always the ready excuse that there were "two sides to a case," and that any particular censor of their conduct was biassed. Certainly no one with any chance of success or without sub-

jecting himself to a suit for libel could have charged Robinson, Myer & Burr with being suborners of perjury, and certainly, until the Hammersly case, Simon would have been indignant at any such charge if made.

One might have been actively connected with the firm for several years without suspecting anything, for its right hand, John Henry Robinson, could hardly be held morally accountable for everything which its left hand —Mr. Myer or Mr. Burr, as the case might be—did. Their activities were too numerous, the ramifications of their business too extensive, for any general accusations to be made against them as a firm.

It was not that they ordinarily failed to conduct themselves as attorneys in a sober, righteous, and godly manner. On the contrary, their standing in the courts was excellent. They rated as "first class" in all "lawyers' lists" and "legal directories." They never were guilty of anything that could be openly criticized, except possibly their inclination to advertise; they sought no more delay than most practitioners; their affidavits were impregnable; their bills for professional services were rarely objected to—and always paid; and yet there was a feeling that they were dangerous to deal with.

Robinson, Myer & Burr encouraged the idea that they had underground personal relations with politicians and advertised their friendliness with the bench. Mr. Robinson's "lawyers' dinners" were famous, both for the distinction of those invited and the quality of the liquor served. Many of the judges, it is true, did not go to them; but, on the other hand, many did. Yet it all helped in the subtly diffused impression that they were in the way of "getting things." At these little parties of Mr. Robinson's one was apt to meet an ex-governor or two, a State senator, a Federal district judge, a couple

of Supreme Court justices, half a dozen prominent attorneys, a few city commissioners, possibly a mayor or corporation counsel or some leading Roman Catholic. They were generally accredited with having the right connections in almost any direction.

Unexpected things happened in litigations in which they were retained. They never appeared personally or as the "attorneys of record" in criminal cases, but they were often found hovering in the immediate neighborhood, employing and paying the special counsel who actually conducted the defense. They were not referred to as "fixers"—they were much too elegant for such a term—but they traded on being such—and perhaps they were.

When Simon arrived at Mr. Robinson's apartment, he found the party already assembled, and on their second round of cocktails before going in to dinner. Beside the host, Myer, and himself, there were present six others, of whom one, by virtue of his distinguished bearing and prophet-like whiskers, was unmistakably Doctor Marcus Hunziker. Mr. Robinson, white-waistcoated and odorously bay-rummed, was in an expansive mood. Simon suspected that there had been previous rounds in which J. H. R. alone had participated. He now heralded Simon's arrival by leading him to the group about the sideboard.

"Gen-til-men! Permit me to introduce to you my—er—partner and friend, the Honorable Simon Kent, of Boston, where the beans come from. That's why I have him for a partner—on account of his bean! Ha! ha! Shake hands with Mr. Kent, gentlemen! 'The Six Little Bug Doctors,' I call 'em. 'The Six Big Little Bugsters!'"

The gentlemen in evening dress who were gathered

about the cocktail shaker turned with an air of faintly amused tolerance at their host's jocosity. Simon perceived that he was in no ordinary company, that is, if the preponderance of polished pink domes and carefully trimmed white beards were any index to distinction. These, forsooth, were venerable men. Eminent, portly, and profound, they suggested a meeting of the French Academy, with even a touch of its elegance.

Doctor Hunziker detached himself from his fellows and shook hands with Simon.

"A pleasure to meet you, Mr. Kent! A great pleasure! Permit me to introduce my associate, Doctor Rosenbloom, at one time assistant physician at the Psychiatrical Hospital at Prague, and now professor of neuropathology at Durham University."

Doctor Rosenbloom, who looked like the picture of a Prussian field-marshal, clicked his heels.

"And my friend, Doctor Wasgatt," flowed on Doctor Hunziker, "professor of nervous and mental diseases at Kesaw Medical College—Doctor Spinnelli, formerly of the University of Pisa and now with the McGurk Colony for Epileptics—Doctor Smith, consulting alienist to the Psychopathic Ward of the Burlington State Hospital—and, last but not least, Doctor Hugo Kelly, the chairman of the Interstate Lunacy Commission."

They all greeted Simon with the gravity proper to their importance in the world of medicine. Simon was shocked at Mr. Robinson's levity.

"'The Six Little Bungstarters,' I call 'em!" he carolled, seizing the arm of Doctor Hunziker. "Now, boys, let's go in to dinner! We've a long night before us! Tum-tum-te-tum! Tum-tum-te-tum! 'Here comes the bride!' Wedding of law and medicine! Fall in everybody!"

In spite of the ill-timed familiarity of their host, Simon was impressed by the distinguished appearance of the men about him, the more so as he observed that no less than three of the six sported the red ribbon of the *légion d'honneur*—or something resembling it. He began to wonder if, after all, Judge Furman could have been right. Wasn't he, as Mr. Robinson had charged, biassed on his own side of the case? Surely, if these notable psychiatrists should agree that Miss Hammersly was incompetent to make a will there was something to be said for their opinion. Doubtless they were as well qualified by experience as any other group of experts to pass upon her condition!

Mr. Robinson's cook had prepared a meal befitting the importance of the occasion, his supply of the best Scotch whiskey was apparently unlimited, and the guests addressed themselves to both with decorous appreciation. As usual at men's dinner-parties, the conversation was sporadic, and, except for the host's noisy witticisms, carried on in low tones. All the *savants* evinced an extraordinary and what seemed to Simon an almost unnecessary respect for one another. "Yes, doctor." "No, doctor." "Certainly, doctor." "I quite agree, doctor." They even occasionally conferred the title upon Simon, who frankly felt the excess of punctilio rather depressing. In the apt phrase of Sinclair Lewis, they were "men of measured merriment."

From Doctor Kelly he learned that Doctor Hunziker, besides conducting a highly successful private sanatorium and handling a large miscellaneous neurological practice, was professor emeritus of mental diseases at Greenbush Medical College, visiting physician at a State insane asylum, and author of a celebrated work on "legal responsibility" which had given him a unique posi-

tion. According to Doctor Kelly, he was the ablest "expert" in the country, one of his chief claims to distinction being his dexterity in the invention of lawyer-baffling phrases.

Said he:

"I regard Doctor Hunziker's invention of the term 'quasi-conscious knowledge,' for example, as a notable contribution to psychiatric terminology. It bridges the chasm between law and medicine. As you are aware, the law holds every man responsible for his acts so long as he knows what he is doing and realizes it to be wrong. Such a definition of criminal responsibility is absurd. Most of the insane know what they are doing when they commit a crime, and they also recognize the fact that, in the eyes of the community, at any rate, it is regarded as wrong. Such a definition, therefore, amounts practically to holding every insane person responsible for his acts. The beauty of Doctor Hunziker's definition is that it at once admits the facts and nullifies them. 'Confession and avoidance,' is, I believe, the legal term. 'Why certainly,' says he, 'my patient had a quasi-knowledge of what he was doing when he killed his mistress, but it was not the kind of knowledge required by the law to make a man criminally responsible for his act, for—*it was an insane knowledge'!*"

Doctor Kelly smiled knowingly at Simon.

"You get the point?" Seemingly satisfied that Simon had got it, he concluded with professional enthusiasm: "And when it comes to paranoia, there isn't any one who can touch him! I assure you it's a pure delight to hear him under cross-examination. If you'll pardon my saying so, he makes monkeys of most lawyers!" Doctor Kelly helped himself from the bottle of Scotch thoughtfully left at his elbow by the butler. "Have a little?

No? As I was saying, there's nobody quite like Hunziker. He has done more to stabilize expert testimony than any man in the United States."

"Stabilize it?" queried Simon.

"Exactly. Elevate it to its proper place in legal procedure, I mean. Why, I can remember the time when the public and even some of the judiciary were inclined to make small of experts. You don't find anything like that in these days! The lawyer looks upon the psychiatrist as a worthy ally. In the old days, if a lawyer wanted to break a will, he simply sent over to the nearest insane pavilion and hired the first attendant or interne he could find, and paid him a measly per diem—fifty dollars or so—to testify. Any 'roughneck' would do. The result was that expert medical testimony fell into disrepute. It opened the door to all sorts of abuses. Today, largely owing to the pioneer work of our leader, Doctor Hunziker, the expert is accorded the weight that he deserves. The courts recognize that the intricacies of the human mind can only be grasped after years of study."

All the psychiatrists present, he confided, were constantly called upon to assist the courts in the decision of difficult cases. Simon was puzzled by the recurrence of the word "we" throughout his remarks.

"I suppose," he hazarded innocently, "that you gentlemen don't always agree——"

"Oh, we never disagree!" replied Doctor Kelly naïvely. "We take the position that on a given state of facts there can be but one opinion. If, in rare instances, one of us finds himself opposed to the rest of us, he merely drops out. We never testify against one another. We act together."

It dawned on Simon that these "experts" were, in

fact, a psychiatrists' union, with Hunziker as their neurological boss. Obviously, the probative value of their testimony would be lessened if cross-examining counsel should be able to bring out the fact that in other cases they had held antagonistic opinions. Hence they "never disagreed," or, if they did, nobody ever knew it.

§ 2

Mr. Robinson pushed back his chair and tossed his napkin upon the table.

"Shall we have coffee in the library? We might as well be comfortable."

This time, thrusting his arms through those of Doctors Kelly and Spinnelli, he conducted his guests across the hall.

Mr. Robinson's library was everything that the art of a well-known interior decorator could make it—bookcases lined each wall to the ceiling, filled with sets bound in divers colors and so massed as to produce a proper artistic effect—red morocco here, blue calf here, green crushed levant here, purple here. A wood-fire crackled on the black marble hearth beneath a mantel on which stood a pair of rare Chinese vases. Over them hung a copy of a famous Rembrandt. Around the fireplace were grouped a row of heavy armchairs upholstered in brown leather.

"Pull up, gentlemen!" urged their host from where he stood warming his coat-tails. He liked to dispense a lavish hospitality, so long as his clients paid for it. The learned gentlemen found seats while the butler, followed by a second man, poured the coffee—and a third man passed a tray of liqueurs.

"Shall we begin?" asked Mr. Robinson, when they

had lighted the cigars and drunk the coffee they prohibited to their patients. "There are so many matters to be gone over! I've prepared a hypothetical question which sooner or later I suppose it'll be necessary to read to you. It's rather long—perhaps first we'd better discuss terms?"

"That is always in order," smiled Doctor Hunziker. "May I inquire the size of the estate?"

Mr. Robinson glanced at his partner.

"What do the schedules show, Mr. Myer?"

"It will run—huh—about three millions."

Hunziker made a jotting with a gold lead-pencil in a small black book.

"In that case," he remarked, "from what I know of the fees in similar cases, I suppose you lawyers will get something like a million dollars for yourselves?"

"We shall make an adequate charge for our services, naturally," temporized Mr. Robinson, who did not regard it as out of place for the experts to wish to know the general amount involved.

Doctor Hunziker turned to the neurologist from Prague.

"What do you think, Doctor Rosenbloom?"

"Dere must be no per diem pishness!" growled the Von Hindenburg of psychiatry. "Oddervise we leave de amount to you!"

"There is no suggestion of a per diem," hastily conciliated Mr. Robinson. "Those days are over. I appreciate that we can't expect men of your eminence to spend weeks of preparation on a case and then go into court at so much per day. We settled that once for all in the Speckler case. We shall expect to compensate you adequately—by a lump sum. How much do you feel that you should receive? Speak up, gentlemen. The heirs,

I'm sure, will be inclined to be generous—they'll surely agree to anything we advise."

He expected Hunziker to ask ten thousand dollars for each of the others, and, perhaps, fifteen for himself.

"What did you pay us in the Watts case?" inquired Doctor Hunziker. "That was the last we had for you here in New York, wasn't it?"

"Yes. There was a million dollars involved. And if I recall correctly, we paid each of the experts five thousand dollars, and seventy-five hundred to you individually as medical counsel. As this is a somewhat larger case, although it will involve no more work on your part, I had in mind to suggest a fee of ten thousand each and fifteen to Doctor Hunziker. Is that satisfactory?"

Simon was startled at the price offered. He had supposed that insanity experts received from fifty to a couple of hundred dollars a day for each day that they actually appeared in court, with perhaps something additional for working time. But ten thousand dollars each! Five thousand extra to Hunziker! That would make sixty-five thousand dollars!

The Stabilizer of Medical Testimony looked around the circle of graybeards—at Doctor Kelly sprawling on his chair with his feet crossed on the fender, at the sardonic, begoggled Doctor Spinnelli, at Doctor Wasgatt's double-storied pink skull, at the melancholy Smith—at Rosenbloom again.

"How does Mr. Robinson's offer strike you, gentlemen?"

The question hung on the air, and Mr. Robinson took an uneasy puff from his cigar.

"I'm of the opinion that the whole system is wrong!" volunteered Doctor Spinnelli.

"Good!" thought Simon. "So am I!"

"How do you mean?" asked Robinson. "What's the matter with it?"

"We should receive a percentage."

"A percentage on what?"

"A percentage on the amount recovered," said Doctor Spinnelli. "That's the only logical way. Why should we doctors be treated any different from you lawyers? Why should you get a million dollars and we get sixty-five thousand?"

Mr. Robinson focussed an opaque oyster-like eye as sternly as he could upon the psychiatrist. The fellow, in his opinion, was getting too obstreperous. After he'd given him such a good dinner, too! Hunziker would sit on him, no doubt, in due course. He felt that he could safely count on Hunziker's co-operation in view of that extra five thousand.

"I don't think it necessary to discuss the equities between us," he said in a tone of reproval. "The case is our case. We got it in the first place. We must prepare and conduct it. We are responsible for it. If we wish to retain the services of you gentlemen as experts, the only question is what shall be the amount of your fees. Am I not right, Doctor Hunziker?" he added hopefully.

Doctor Hunziker ran his fingers through his white beard.

"I confess, Mr. Robinson," he answered in a manner obviously intended to be soothing, "that in a general way I am inclined to the view expressed by Doctor Spinnelli. After all, it is only another method of arriving at practically the same result. What difference would it make to you if we were compensated on a percentage basis?"

Mr. Robinson showed impatience.

"I'm by no means sure that the courts would regard

such an arrangement as ethical!" he asserted. "The committee of which I am chairman——"

"Say, what are you—huh—fellows up to?" Myer pushed his way between the chairs toward the fireplace. 'This is something new, eh?"

Hunziker made a palliating gesture. He had more respect for Myer than for Robinson, whom he regarded as a windy jackass.

"It's merely a question of how we should be compensated, Mr. Myer. Mr. Robinson brought it up himself. We have no idea of being unreasonable. You recall that you agreed with me, when we abolished the old per diem system, that the only things to be considered were that the evidence had been given and had directly contributed to the result. Hence, we devised the present arrangement, whereby we are paid a fixed sum, irrespective of the time occupied in testifying, depending on the importance of our testimony. We merely say now that, in a difficult or delicate case, what we've been getting in the past is not enough in proportion to what the lawyers expect to receive. There's nothing unreasonable about that. The laborer is worthy of his hire. If we're willing to take the same chance as yourselves and receive nothing in the event of the case being lost, then we see no reason why we should not go fifty-fifty with you."

Myer's leathery countenance became suffused.

"Have you really got the nerve to say—huh—that if we pull down a million dollars you expect us to give you five hundred thousand of it?" he barked.

Hunziker looked Myer squarely in the eye.

"Why not? Why should you get a million dollars and give us only six per cent of it? You wouldn't get anything without our help. Why shouldn't we divide equally?"

"You wouldn't—huh—be here but for us!" shouted Myer. "It's our case!'

"We wouldn't be here, if you hadn t needed us!"

"We could have got plenty of others."

Doctor Hunziker smiled with patient sarcasm.

"Try to find a few!"

Myer hurled his cigar butt into the fire.

"If we split with you—huh—they'd have us up before the Grievance Committee of the Bar Association!"

"I don't see why it's any worse in principle for us than for you," continued Hunziker calmly. "If it's unethical for a doctor to take a contingent fee, why shouldn't it be for a lawyer?"

"May I say a word?" intervened Doctor Kelly, removing his legs from the fender. "We don't want to crowd the mourners. We're trying to establish a principle. We recognize the importance of getting the business in the first place—don't we, doctor?"

"Of course," agreed Hunziker. "Don't let's get excited over nothing. Let's just try and accustom ourselves to the idea of being partners in a common enterprise, the proceeds of which we expect to share between us. There's nothing unusual about it. The only question is in what proportion we are going to do it. Now in suggesting an equal division, I think I am voicing the opinion of my confrères. In fact, we discussed the matter coming up here this evening. But have you any counter-proposition to make to us?"

A silence, significant and ominous, followed his words. Mr. Robinson and Mr. Myer exchanged glances.

"Pardon us a moment," said Mr. Robinson. "Just step out into the hall with me, Myer—and you, Kent!"

Simon followed them.

"It's—huh—an outrage!" growled Myer hoarsely, shaking his fist toward the library.

Robinson took him by the elbow.

"Those damned highbinders had it all planned out beforehand," he said. "They'll do exactly as Hunziker says. They've got the expert market cornered and they know it!"

"Looks as if we were stung!" agreed Myer. "But don't pay 'em a cent—huh—more than you have to—eh?"

Simon was not consulted. He clearly had been invited only in order to give an impression of a deployment in force. With dignity Mr. Robinson, followed by Simon and Myer, returned to the library.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, as he resumed his place before the chimney-piece, "we have talked your suggestion over, and if you wish to be paid on a contingent basis and are fully prepared to take nothing in the event of failure, we're willing to double the amount I offered you in cash—that is to say, in the event of success we'll increase your fees from ten to twenty thousand each, and Doctor Hunziker's from fifteen to thirty thousand."

To Simon's surprise, Doctor Hunziker exhibited no pleasure at this proposal.

"I think we should have at least twenty-five per cent of your fees," he said evenly. "Most of my associates feel we should get fifty."

Mr. Robinson shook his head definitely.

"Out of the question. We're surrendering thirty-five per cent of our fee already in return for the business. If we gave you twenty it wouldn't leave us half. We'll give you fifteen flat. That's the best we can do."

Doctor Hunziker glanced at Doctor Kelly, who nodded.

"All right, doctor—let it go at that! Are you satisfied, gentlemen?"

Hunziker turned to Robinson and Myer.

"It's understood and agreed, then, that if the will is denied probate, we are to receive collectively a sum equal to fifteen per cent of your gross fee, without any deductions for expenses?"

"Correct!" replied Mr. Robinson. "It's a bargain!"

Simon had been growing more and more restive. Doctor Hunziker helped himself to a fresh cigar, lighted it, stroked his whiskers, and turned his chair so as to face his fellow "bugsters."

"Want to look at the 'hypothetical'?" inquired Mr. Robinson, patting his breast-pocket.

"No, not now!" Hunziker waved the suggestion aside as unimportant. "Well, gentlemen," he began easily, "we all know why we're here! Our host has told me enough about the case in general to enable me to say that, if this will is going to be broken at all, it must be on the ground of senile dementia. We've a pretty good basis for such a claim already—complication of chronic diseases, mysophobia, delusions of poverty and persecution, general irascibility and sudden outbursts of temper, antipathy to old friends and relatives, and an insane fondness for cats—the latter, of course, most important. Senile dementia's sufficiently vague to let in almost everything. I don't think the evidence is picturesque enough for paranoia or dementia præcox, but if you gentlemen have any suggestions to make I shall be glad to hear them. No? Well, then! Assuming that the testatrix had senile dementia, it's up to us to tell our legal friends here exactly what sort of evidence they should look for to support that theory. Suppose I describe for

the benefit of us all what I would regard as a typical case——"

Could he have heard truly? Was this pharisee in broadcloth and white linen, who had just sold himself and his band for a contingent interest in the booty, about to instruct them how to perpetrate the crime and dispose of the body? In what way did the present proceeding differ from the hiring of a gang of strong-arm men to commit a robbery? In none, essentially, save that these were soft-voiced gentlemanly malefactors, who took no chances of putting their heads in a noose, and, instead of wearing black masks, disguised themselves as learned men. What was this but one more instance of the universal truth that what passes for respectability is often nothing but crime in a clean collar? In a flash he saw the heavens unrolling, and the hosts of darkness contending with the children of light. He did not hesitate where to range himself.

"One moment, Doctor Hunziker!" Simon shoved back his chair and stood up. "Am I to understand that you are prepared to diagnose the testatrix's condition without reading the hypothetical question?"

"I am prepared to state here and now that from what Mr. Robinson has told me, the testatrix must have been a 'senile dement,' replied Hunziker tartly.

"Wouldn't a perusal of the question—provided it was based on the evidence—be of any value to you in coming to your conclusion?" persisted Simon.

Doctor Hunziker munched his moustache.

"My dear Mr. Kent—that's the name, isn't it?—you do not quite get my position! Your office has retained us on a contingent basis, to assist you to break Miss Hammersly's will. I and my associates have come here at your request to prepare our campaign. It is necessary

to inquire at the outset what sort of insanity the testatrix may have had, in order to know what symptoms to look for and to find the necessary proof. Of course, if that proof is not forthcoming, if we finally decide that the testatrix was not insane and was fully competent to make her will, that will be the end of it. There will be no contest. Our trip will have been in vain. Meantime we must assume that we have not been summoned without reason, that the case is an honest case, and that you gentlemen are sincere in your contentions. That being so, we must, merely in the interest of time if of nothing else, eliminate from our investigation all forms of insanity which on their face are improbable; and, conversely, we should select tentatively some form of insanity as being supposedly what she did have and test our hypothesis as we go along. I hope I make myself clear?"

"In other words," answered Simon, "you are prepared to decide upon what kind of insanity the testatrix had before you know whether or not she was insane!"

Doctor Hunziker looked as if he thought he was being trifled with.

"That is mere pettifoggery!" he remarked. "You understand perfectly that the diagnosis is purely tentative."

"I understand," retorted Simon, "that you and your associates, in return for a fifteen per cent contingent interest in our ultimate fees, which interest you estimate at approximately one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and, without knowing anything of the actual evidence or even reading the hypothetical question prepared by our side of the case, which you will ultimately have to answer on the witness stand—are prepared to give it as your opinion that this old lady had senile dementia and

to tell us lawyers what kind of evidence we must get to make good on it!"

He drew from his pocket his own copy of the hypothetical question and shook it at the learned psychiatrist.

"I understood that I had been invited to attend a conference of physicians, experts upon mental diseases, who would listen dispassionately to a statement of the facts and, after duly weighing them, would tell us whether we would be justified in making the claim that Miss Hammersly was incompetent to make a will. Instead, I find that you are ready to prejudge the case and to assume at the outset the very question which you will ultimately be asked to pass upon—in a word, that you are willing to sell your services, including your testimony under oath, to help break this will, provided the case turns out to be not too raw."

They stared at him as if he were crazy.

"Well, gentlemen," continued Simon, "you may be willing to practise medicine that way, but—" and he looked directly at Robinson and Myer—"I'm not willing to practise law that way. If you want to break this will you'll have to do it without my help. I retire."

He tossed the hypothetical question into the fire. For an instant nothing happened, then the cover caught and the whole thing burst into flames.

"Good evening, gentlemen!"

Mr. Robinson, hurrying down-stairs after Simon, overtook him in the front hall, where he was pulling on his coat.

"Am I really to understand that you're not willing to stay in the case?" he asked anxiously.

"You are! Or in the firm either!" answered Simon shortly. "Good-bye!" He walked out.

He had a terrible moment, as he descended in the ele-

vator, during which he felt that he had left both his stomach and his future on the floor of Mr. Robinson's apartment—that he had chucked everything! What was he to do now? But by the time he reached the street he was immensely relieved. Thank God, he had shunted old Polonius off his shoulders for good!

He was free—free as he had not been since he had entered Robinson, Myer & Burr's! Life was before him again! It was a clear, soft night—the midnight sky clothed with stars and his soul, at liberty once more, soared among them. Whistling and chuckling by turns, he sped on elastic heels down Fifth Avenue, turned into Forty-fourth Street, and leaped up the steps of the Harvard Club. It was deserted save for an after-theatre group in a distant corner. The telephone operator drowsily plugged Otto's number.

"That you, Ot?"

"Yep. Who is it—'Red'?"

"You bet! Say, you're not in bed, are you? Come on out and take a walk!"

"This time of night! Are you crazy?"

Simon's laugh had in it the ring of a college cheer.

"Yep! That's just what I am! Crazy as a coot! And I've got to have somebody to be crazy with. I'm free, Otto! Free of—everything!"

"You mean you've chucked Old Muttonchops?"

"You've said it!"

"Well, I'll be damned!"

"I've lots more to tell you! About Clarice, you know! I'll start for your place right now and——"

There was a roar from the other end. Out of it materialized the words:

"If I'm going too fast when we meet—throw the switch!"

They hugged on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Fiftieth Street and executed a war-dance. Then they started down Broadway, to an interminable gabble.

"I knew it would come, Red! But I didn't suspect it would be so soon!" said Otto, as they reached Times Square. "What are you going to do?"

"I haven't the remotest idea! Gosh, I'm hungry! How about a hot dog and a cup of coffee?"

They swaggered into a white-tiled "automat," with rows of marble tables, most of the seats of which were already occupied. Simon changed a fifty-cent piece.

"Say, old Ot, what do you want?"

"Oh, beans, I guess—and a chocolate éclair and custard pie, and a cup of coffee."

They dropped in their nickels, eager as children to unearth the hidden treasures behind the small glass doors.

"Excuse me, mister!" said a high-pitched voice from Simon's waist-line. "Would you mind putting in my nickel for a tomato salad? It's a bit too high for me."

Simon looked down and saw that he was being addressed by a dwarf in overcoat and derby.

"Sure! Anything else?"

And then, to his amazement, he perceived that the whole place was full of dwarfs. The cafeteria was alive with them. He was in a world—or at least a city—of dwarfs. The one below followed his glance. He was a shrewd-looking little fellow, with deeply hollowed eyes and parchment-like skin, drawn tight back over the bones of his world-worn face.

"Thanks," he said, as Simon handed him down the tomato salad. "I'm Gaston, of Gaston's Galaxy of Midgets. We're just from the Bijou—ours is the last act." He shoved his plate upon a table and climbed

laboriously to a stool. He might—when you looked at him closely—have been anything from forty to a hundred. Otto, juggling half a dozen saucers, slid his crockery alongside.

"Your work keeps you up late, Mr. Gaston."

"One soon gets used to that," piped the little man. "It's easy enough to adjust one's life to one's work, provided one has the work. In the case of a dwarf it's rather limited. There's not much demand for our people, you know, except for entertainment. I have twenty-four dwarfs and midgets in my troupe, and most of 'em started in doing something else. But in the end they all went back to being just dwarfs. Would you give me a cup of coffee? Thanks." The little people at the other tables were making a great chattering. The cafeteria rang with their shrill laughter.

"There's a certain satisfaction in knowing that, in a sense, your life is ordained for you," continued Mr. Gaston, with a whimsical squint in his beady eyes. "A dwarf knows there's no use in trying to be a giant, just as a giant knows there's no use trying to be a dwarf. You might want to be something else, but you can't. I've a friend who's a giant—a Mr. Ezra of Providence—Arab Smith Ezra his name is—he tried being a doorman for a while, but he gave it up. I asked him once why he went back to the circus. The reason he gave was that being by nature a giant, he couldn't stand having people think he was just a doorman. He had a certain pride in being a giant and wanted the credit for it, so to speak. You can understand that."

"Right-o!" agreed Otto. "And if a fellow is born honest, I guess he'd have a hard time trying to be a crook! He might as well chuck it—like your friend Mr. Ezra—and run true to form."

"You've said something!" said Simon. "Do you want anything more, Mr. Gaston? Good night."

§ 3

Simon handed in his formal resignation to Mr. Robinson the following morning. This time he did not laugh, although it seemed to him that the face of Justice Taft wore an expression of approval.

"Apart from my lack of conviction in the Hammersly case," he explained, "I have a feeling that I want to lay off for a while. Fact is—and you'll probably think me a goop!—I want to finish a book I'm writing."

Mr. Robinson hoisted panic signals.

"But my dear fellow! We can't allow you to resign from the firm! We couldn't get on without you. Besides, you owe us—me!—something!—Come, come! You're just tired! Take a vacation! Go down to the Everglades Club for a week with that lovely wife of yours. You may pick up some business on the golf-links. No, no! I won't hear of your resigning. I thought you were a little nervous and upset the way you acted last night, a bit brusque with Doctor Hunziker."

"'A bit brusque'?"

"Just a shade."

Simon got up and took a nearer view of Taft, J.

"I thought I insulted him!" he remarked.

Mr. Robinson pursed his waxen lips.

"Oh, I wouldn't call it that. Emphatic—rather."

Simon wheeled and came to a stop beside his chief. He felt extraordinarily relieved—almost jocular. He seemed to look down upon Mr. Robinson from an immeasurable height—nearly from that of Mr. Taft.

"Well, if he didn't feel insulted it wasn't my fault. I

tried to insult him all right. I'm sorry, but I've got to resign, Mr. Robinson. I don't know exactly what my future plans will be—but they don't include the practice of law in the immediate present."

Mr. Robinson shook his side-whiskers.

"I refuse to accept your resignation, Simon. For me it would be like losing a son. Go off and stay as long as you want. Go to Egypt or India or China. Stay a year. Spend what you need and charge it to the firm—'Expense B,' you know. We'll regard it as a Sabbatical. I just simply won't have you leave us!"

"You're very kind, sir! But I've got to go at the end of the week. I've learned a great deal here, and you couldn't possibly have been more considerate and generous!"

Mr. Robinson, looking confused and distressed, gave Simon a flabby hand.

"I'm not taking you seriously, you know—" he protested.

Simon ran blithely on.

"If I might be permitted to make a suggestion before I go? I think Mr. Hepper deserves a higher salary and a better position with the firm—a junior partnership at least."

An expression verging upon horror stole over Mr. Robinson's face.

"We couldn't change Hepper!" he declared. "Not on any account! You don't find fellows like that lying around everywhere. He's the best chief clerk in New York City. That's why we pay him ten thousand dollars a year."

"But if he's so valuable why don't you make him a partner?" inquired Simon.

"He's much too clever to be a partner! No one needs

to know as much as Hepper, for general purposes of practice!" asserted Mr. Robinson. "Besides—he doesn't look exactly—*you* know——?"

Simon understood exactly what Mr. Robinson meant. He realized that Mr. Hepper was one of those unfortunates who, like Cyrano de Bergerac, do not look the part that nature has fitted them to play. Nevertheless, he was one of the best lawyers in New York.

"Besides," added Mr. Robinson, "he drinks. I couldn't make a man who drank a partner in the firm—not possibly!"

And then Simon made what to Mr. Robinson was a wholly irrelevant and immaterial—not to say astonishing—remark.

"Did it ever occur to you," he suggested, "that Mr. Hepper drank because you didn't make him a partner?"

§ 4

He passed the day sorting papers, dictating memoranda about unfinished matters, calling on Judge Furman, and packing up his library on Liberty, which he carried home with him in a taxi.

He was glad to find Thorn at the apartment, for the copper-man's presence served to relieve what otherwise might have proved a delicate situation. There was no visible trace in Clarice of the harpy she had shown herself to be the day before at his office, and she mixed their cocktails and jollied both of them as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

"You won't object, will you, if I steal your wife this evening?" inquired Thorn, who was in evening dress.

"Buckley has asked me to dine and go to the Follies," explained Clarice. "I didn't think you'd mind."

"Not at all!" replied Simon. "I'm working this evening. Otto's coming over after dinner. If you're going out, I'll dine with him at the Harvard Club."

"I hope you'll use the drawing-room exactly as is most convenient for you," she said. "Well, be a good boy!"

Simon was so afraid that she would try to kiss him that he bolted. He telephoned Otto, and after a hasty supper they returned to the apartment and played havoc with the drawing-room.

"Let's throw that sofa out in the hall!" he said to Otto. "And shove the table into the middle of the room in front of the fireplace ! Put all my books on it—every damn book!"

"Where's the woman going to sit?"

"She'll find a place. Trust her!"

Otto, coatless and dusty, looking like a dissolute image of Confucius with a pipe stuck in its mouth, grinned.

"In other words, you're going to be a giant?"

"Or a dwarf—whichever God intended me to be," asserted Simon.

He had, as yet, said nothing to Clarice about having severed his connection with Robinson, and, before taking David to school next morning, he left word with Miranda that he would be back shortly to speak with her. She was still in bed on his return, but the smell of cigarette-smoke from her room indicated that she had breakfasted. He found her sitting in languid comfort among a pile of pillows, glancing through the paper.

"Come in!" she said. "How is it you're not at the office?"

"I'm not going there any more. I've resigned from the firm."

A look of incredulity spread over her face.

"Resigned! What's the trouble?"

"No trouble. I just got fed up with it. This Hammersly case of Thorn's was the last straw. It's pure blackmail. I told you I was going to lead my own life. Well, I am!"

"What are you going to do? Start an office of your own?"

"Not if I can help it."

"But how are we going to live?"

"I haven't thought anything about it. I've a couple of thousand dollars coming to me from the firm—and you have your thousand of income."

"But we can't live on that!"

"Not as we do now. Our lease is up at the end of the month. Naturally, we won't be able to renew. I suppose you could go back to your mother's?"

Her nostrils contracted.

"Oh, no you don't!" she said, and he saw her fingers curl. "You can't shake me as easy as all that. I stay with you, laddie-boy. 'Where thou goest, I will go.'"

"All right!" retorted Simon easily. "I'll call up Mrs. McGowan." He could not help a furtive satisfaction. "Maybe she's got something."

"Don't be nasty!"

"I'm not being nasty. If you don't like Mrs. McGowan's, try and find something else. I'm going to be busy for a while. I've got to finish my book."

"Humph! That old book!"

"Yes, it's quite old enough. If I don't finish it soon I might get senile dementia."

She dropped her cigarette into her coffee-cup.

"Simon," she said, cupping her chin with her left hand, "you're a fool! I can't believe you've thrown away your chance at Robinson, Myer & Burr's! They'd

have made you a full partner by next year. You must be joking!"

"Not for a minute!"

"Then you ought to go to a doctor!—I see the whole thing!" she went on with spite. "You'll try to make me divorce you. It's no use. I shan't, no matter what you do. This is only a passing phase. You'll get sick of that pale-faced girl of yours. You'll want me again—me and all the things I've brought you."

He knew that she felt quite sure of it. She could not grasp any other possibility.

"I'd be glad never to see you again," he replied, "and I shan't ever again live with you as your husband. If I did I should be condoning what I regard as a fraud. I regard our marriage as dissolved in the eyes of God. I shall hold myself free to do as I choose. I may not be able to get a divorce, but if you insist on staying married to me in law, you'll have to conduct yourself as the law requires. I don't know what I'm going to do. I may stay in New York and I may go to China—and if you expect me to support you you'll have to go along."

She lay silent among her pillows for several seconds. Then she selected a perfumed cigarette and lit it.

"Oh, well," she said, looking at him out of the corners of her eyes, "I guess I can stick it if you can, Simon, dear!"

§ 5

He carried out his resolution to move his bed into David's room, and proceeded to put his house in order as best he could. They must live somewhere; Clarice could compel his support, and there was David to be looked out for. "The History of Human Liberty" could not be written without bread. Sometimes he wondered

if it were worth the writing. Human liberty? Was there such a thing?

In the midst of his uncertainty as to his future came a letter from the secretary of the Harvard Law School, offering him a position as instructor, at twenty-four hundred dollars a year. Having learned, he wrote, through Judge Furman of Simon's resignation from the firm with which he had until recently been connected, he wondered whether there might not be a possibility of his being induced to consider "a scholastic interlude." The assistant professor who gave the courses in "sales," "agency," and "criminal law" had been forced to go away on account of ill-health. If Simon could act as a substitute throughout the balance of the spring term, he would be doing them a favor, and should he, after trying it, like to stay on as a member of the faculty, he could have an instructorship, with every prospect of further advancement later on. Would he kindly reply by telegraph, as the position must be filled immediately.

"Of course you'll take it, 'Red'!" cried Otto when Simon showed him the letter.

"Will I *take* it!" returned Simon. "Say, Ot, if, to quote the words of a great jurist, I'm going too fast when I reach Harvard Square—I hope they'll have sense enough to throw the switch!"

That Clarice took his laconic announcement seriously was indicated by the sudden reappearance of Mrs. Hungerford, after a prolonged absence. Until the afternoon of her arrival Simon had not laid eyes on her for nearly five months, during which period he had heard of her vaguely as taking a "land voyage" to Arizona and Southern California. Like the scenes of her wanderings, she was in full flower and filled the circumambient atmosphere with a delicate aroma of orange blossom and

the old familiar wintergreen. What most impressed Simon was her obvious fear of him. It seemed hours before she dared reach the point—hours of travelogue filled with rapturous recollections of the "Painted Desert," those wonderful cave-dwellings, the Grand Cañon, into which she had descended perched upon the back of a mule, with her heart in her mouth and her eyes tight shut—and never, never would anything tempt her to do it again, never!—and the Imperial Valley and Santa Barbara and then the Panama Canal! Oh, it was just too lovely and wonderful! And now—sniff!—just as she'd got back to her baby she learned—sniff!—that Simon was planning to take her sweet away.

"She doesn't have to come if she doesn't want to," said Simon. "Why don't you ask her to visit you for the rest of the winter?"

Mother Hungerford's pale eyes blurred with distress. It was clear that Clarice had not confided anything to her.

"Oh, I couldn't take her away from you, Simon!" she quavered. "Maybe I might come and stay with you a little while in Cambridge, if you had room for me."

"That would be simply great!" Simon assured her.

But in spite of his new-found sense of freedom, the thought of leaving Vira behind him in New York made him miserable. The note which she had addressed to him at the office made it clear that in her opinion they must not see each other again, so long as Clarice remained his wife. That she intended so to remain was made equally clear by Clarice. After all, as she said, Boston society—the North Shore hunting crowd—"Myopia" and all that—was just as smart if not smarter than New York. She armed herself new worlds to conquer.

CHAPTER XIV

§ 1

Simon, by good fortune, was able to rent for the balance of the term, at a nominal sum, the small wooden house with mansard roof on Mt. Auburn Street, belonging to the professor whose place he had been engaged to fill. An antediluvian cook and general housework "girl," named Ellen, came with it—at a wage slightly less than Simon's salary—but while it was in many respects above the average of professional residences, Clarice, at her first sight of it, could not repress a shudder. After the enamel paint and tiled bathroom of their New York apartment, its cinder walk and battered ash-cans, its sagging "winter-porch" with dislocated "storm-door," its discolored façade of muddy ochre, and its low-ceiled, stuffy interior, smelling of rancid upholstery and onions, was unquestionably a come-down.

Professor Buskin and his wife had evidently considered money expended on furniture as thrown away, and, like the site of ancient Ilium, there were at least nine periods of occupancy easily discernible in the pictures, ornaments, and hangings, which ran the gamut from the Mediæval, the Neo-Classic, and the Romantic down through the various phases of the late Victorian and early Pullman to just plain "Cambridge." The sitting-room, upon the left of the entrance, was almost entirely given over to a walnut-cased square piano belonging to the period of George the Fourth, so heavily weighted with carving that the legs could easily have served for hat-racks. The floor was partially covered with a carpet rug of threadbare Brussels. A steel-engraving of a

confiding mastiff and a St. Bernard, the latter carrying a wooden barrel for medicinal purposes only, denominated "The Faithful Friends," and exhibiting an irregular brown line where, in a previous existence, it had been damaged by water, hung behind the piano, between two windows, draped, each from a single side, with olive velveteen. A "cork village" stood under a glass dome on an inlaid table bearing the word "ROMA" in pink mosaics. There was also a Chinese vase sporting a bunch of rat-bitten cat-tails, and a Swiss chair of oiled wood which, when sat upon, played with considerable hesitancy a tune at times recognizable as "*Ach, du lieber Augustin.*"

"This room ought to be presented intact to the Metropolitan Art Museum," opined Clarice. "It's got the 'Mid-Victorian' exhibit there beat a mile. Did you ever see such junk? I'm going to give this Ellen biddy a good talking to. Any one can see that the Buskins weren't very particular. The dust is something terrible."

This latter stricture was indubitably justified, the slightest contact with any curtain or portière immediately filling the air with a thick cloud of motes. Ellen, the heavy-footed, had a constitutional aversion to any form of cleaning, and what efforts she did put forth only seemed to make a bad matter worse. Clarice's suggestions were met on her part by a vacant stare—whether of actual or simulated stupidity it was impossible to determine—and the sullen reiteration: "Mrs. Buskin niver did it that way!"

It was apparent that fresh air had been anathema to the Buskins, for winged ants, imprisoned behind the hermetically sealed double windows of the parlor and dining-room, had grown to full maturity and died there of starvation, literally by hundreds.

"Disgusting things! That old bathroom smells terribly, Simon. You'll have to get some kind of disinfectant! I wonder if the furnace works all right."

"It used to," he answered cheerfully. "When I took care of it, six years ago, it did."

"You—took—care—of—this—furnace!" Her head cocked at him.

"Sure. This was one of my furnaces. Used to start in on the Sparks's chores three doors above, and then come on over here. It ate up an awful lot of coal."

Clarice held her peace. What her inward reflections may have been, Simon could only surmise.

But if Clarice was personally disappointed, for David the move to Cambridge proved an unqualified success. He was charmed by Ellen, fascinated by the ash-cans, and ecstatic over the gray squirrel inhabiting the elm-tree in the corner of the garden behind the woodshed. They had not been there ten minutes before he came running in, round-eyed with excitement.

"Daddy!" he cried, "There's the very same squirrel we used to feed in the park! The very same—he's only got half a tail! How do you s'pose he ever got here?"

"Must have heard we were coming, son, and thought he'd give us a surprise!" answered Simon. "How do you like Cambridge?"

"I love it!" answered David. "It's like living in Central Park! There's a boy who lives in the next house who's got a fire-engine. He spoke to me through the fence. His name is Oswald. May I go and play with him?"

"Sure! Go and stay as long as you like. Ask Oswald where he goes to school. He must be Professor Jackson's kid," he explained to Clarice. "Rather nice to live in a place where you know all the people, isn't it?"

"And the furnaces!" she could not help adding, with a touch of malice.

§ 2

Once back in the familiar Cambridge scene, it seemed to Simon as if he had never left the Law School. His two years in the army, and his life in New York, took on an unreal fourth dimensional quality like the dissolving views of a cinema, in which another Simon Kent appeared as the actor upon the screen. He had been cordially welcomed by the Dean and other members of the faculty, who made him feel that they envied his four years' experience with an active New York firm as an opportunity to observe the practical application of the principles he was now called upon to teach. It did not seem particularly strange to him to be lecturing from the platform in a classroom where he had once occupied a desk upon the floor, and he found his daily contact with the first-year men stimulating and delightful. He was even able to use to good effect the notes and syllabi which he had made as a student in the same courses. In less than a week he had dropped back completely into his old scholastic life—preparation and lectures every morning, case reading and preparation in the afternoon, handball and calisthenics from five to six, an hour with David, early dinner, and then long, long evenings in the quiet library of the Law School, working upon his book.

Even the presence of Clarice did not serve completely to dispel the impression that he had never been away. He saw her but once a day, at dinner-time, and, when they met, their conversation was impersonally casual. She was, as far as he was concerned, merely a visitor in his house, toward whose entertainment he refused to

assume any obligation. His suggestion, that she might like to have her mother come to stay with her, was met by the now inveterate shrug. She had frankly settled down to a campaign of starvation. Sooner or later she believed his passion for her would revive and he would come back to her. Until then she must play a waiting game and take advantage of such social opportunities as she could.

Simon preëmpted the library, and Clarice the front bedroom. The closet refused to harbor more than a small fraction of her clothes, and most of her trunks remained temporarily unopened in the front hall. She and Ellen were at logger-heads from the start. The Irishwoman had apparently never heard of any one who took breakfast in bed.

"Bring it up on a tray when I ring—just toast, marmalade, and coffee," her mistress directed. "But be sure and have it hot!"

Ellen gazed at her blankly, mutely, and, it may even be said, malevolently. The breakfast did not come up. After waiting and ringing impatiently for fifteen minutes, Clarice put on a wrapper and went down to the kitchen.

"I thought I told you to bring up my breakfast when I rang!" she said severely.

"And was ye afther ringin'?" blandly inquired Ellen from the sink. "Sure an' I heard no bell! Whoever knew the likes o' that!"

"I shall expect you to hear it to-morrow morning. I trust that you understand?"

Ellen gaped at her. Clarice could hear her mumbling long after she had left the kitchen. But, ring as she would next morning, she could elicit no response from the lower regions. She telephoned the employment agency in Harvard Square, only to be met with the in-

formation that "generals" were almost impossible to find, and the polite intimation that a woman who was doing the entire housework for a family of three might be justified in regarding an order to serve her mistress with breakfast in bed as a trifle inconsiderate.

"Most of the ladies who keep only one maid do a part of the work themselves," commented the woman in charge of the bureau. "Usually they at least take care of their own bedrooms and do the dusting. No, I'm very sorry, but I can't promise to find you a substitute for Ellen McGee. We've known Ellen for years and she's always given satisfaction. If you let her go I can place her to-morrow. I should be inclined to feel that you were expecting too much of her."

Clarice slapped the telephone receiver back on the hook. Nothing had brought home the change in her situation so much as the simple necessity of getting up in the morning. It was not that she objected to eating in the dingy dining-room so much as the fact that, unless she lay late in bed, the days were so long! For there was nothing for her to do in Cambridge, absolutely nothing —except to stroll down Brattle Street to Harvard Square, through the Yard, and back again by North Avenue and Craigie Street, peering at the wooden houses so primly withdrawn from the public gaze. She rarely saw anybody either going in or coming out. Once or twice she had caught at tea-time a glimpse of mellow lamplight or the reflection of a fire through some unshaded window, but otherwise it seemed to her that she might just as well be living in Mt. Auburn Cemetery. Nobody rang her front door-bell. She sought to encourage herself by saying that one couldn't move unheralded to a new place and have people tumbling over themselves the very first minute to give one a good time. She had

vaguely imagined that the news of her advent would somehow percolate, through the wives of the Law-School faculty, perhaps, to the leaders of local society, and that curiosity, if nothing else, would lead them to call. But she began to suspect that people didn't have a good time in Cambridge.

She had already mailed the letters of introduction which she had solicited from Ava Joyce and Gladys Munson—one to Mrs. Philip Carrington, a lady living on Beacon Street, one to a Mrs. Bethune, Gladys's aunt in Brookline, and one to Mrs. Grantly, the wife of a young professor of archæology, whose house was only a few rods away from them on Brattle Street. But luck was against her. Mrs. Carrington was in Morocco; Mrs. Bethune was convalescing at the Massachusetts General Hospital, after an operation; and Alice Grantly proved to be on the verge of motherhood, as was euphemistically explained in a polite, but belated, note from her husband, personally delivered at a time when Clarice suspected he knew her to be out. To add to her gloom, she awoke each morning to the drumfire of a heavy downpour which turned the cinder path into a canal and the streets into lakes of yellow mud. It was true that, at such times as the sun managed to break through, it was possible to detect tiny fronds of green and bronze on the branches of the elms and maples, and already in Longfellow Park the forsythia was out and the Japanese quince beginning to show red. But even the promise of early spring did not cheer her, for what promise did it bring?

She did not care for anything except novels, and Professor Buskin's library contained only books upon law, or commentaries upon such works as the "Institutes of Justinian." Glancing through it, she concluded that Justinian, whoever he was, was the deadest of the dead.

She wanted live ones—people who knew what was going on in the great world, played bridge, and gave house parties! Even if Cambridge were, as she was beginning to suspect it to be, a "*città morta*," she knew that across the Charles River there were great houses where foreign diplomats and artists were entertained, and the *beau monde* met—a world in which her beauty and her charm would give her standing once she had the entrée. But how to gain it? If only somebody—anybody!—would press the button on her door-jamb—she would do the rest.

But nobody did. Her only caller during the first two weeks was Mrs. (Professor) Jackson—Oswald's mother—who appeared one afternoon at tea-time. Clarice sized her up in one swift glance. Mrs. Jackson was a squirrel-cheeked woman who gave the impression of just having stopped running and of being upon the point of starting on another sprint. She was pantingly cordial, volubly distrait, and her skirts came to the top of her scalloped shoes. She had taken the greatest fancy to David; he made such a splendid playmate for Oswald. Later on they must take the two little boys on some nice picnics to Norumbega Park. You took the trolley to Allston and then transferred. It was lovely out there. She often went—and left a cold supper for the professor. She hoped Clarice would enjoy Cambridge. She had been there herself eight years now, and liked it ever so much better than Orono, where they had lived when Oswald, Senior, had taught at the University of Maine. Clarice and her husband must come over for Sunday lunch some time soon and bring David. It would be the simplest sort of a meal, for she did all her own work. She just envied Clarice having a girl like Ellen! She panted her way out, leaving Clarice more disgruntled than ever.

Fancy having to be neighborly with a woman like that!

§ 3

Succor unexpectedly appeared. Simon, returning earlier than usual, was greeted by a familiar sound. Somebody was shaking cocktails. An overcoat and derby hat lay across the lower banister. Voices came from the parlor. A click!—"*Ach, du lieber Augustin!*"—a rumble of laughter! What the devil! His old friend, the dean!

"Why, Simon, old fellow! Why didn't you let me know you were here? I'd have been around long ago! I only heard at a faculty meeting——!"

They embraced affectionately.

"Wasn't it dear of him to call right off like this?" Clarice, a sunset cloud in her smartest tea-gown, purred loudly. "I like deans!—nice comfortable ones!"

"Unfortunately, I'm a dean no longer. I resigned three years ago."

"Then you'll have all the more time to come and see me! I shall expect you at least three times a week!"

He smiled benignly.

"I'm afraid you'd soon tire of an old fogy like me! What you need is young people. You must meet some of the professors' wives. How do you like Cambridge so far?"

"I love it!" she cried. "It's so cosy and restful after the hurly-burly of New York." She daintily poured the cocktails and offered him one. "Of course we had to take what we could get in the way of a house—if you can call this a house and not a second-hand furniture-store. I did want to be on Brattle Street, near the Longfellow Mansion, if possible—but people have been so kind and neighborly! Not that I've met many of them as yet.

But they're calling—gradually. The trouble is all you clever people are so busy! I'm afraid it will take a long time to get to know everybody—that is, the ones I'd like to know—like yourself."

She released a devastating glance from the opalescent depths of her veiled eyes. The ex-dean raised his glass.

"I don't think you'll have the slightest trouble, once they know you're here! Welcome to Cambridge!"

"It's wonderful to see you at last, after hearing of you for so long!" she assured him. "Simon has spoken of you so often!"

"I hope he told you how we met?" commented the ex-dean, and they all laughed. "Well, I must be moving!" he added, taking Clarice's hand. "I'll send my sister, Mrs. Talcott, to call at once. Her husband is the professor of classical philology. I dare say she'll bore you to death with invitations. She loves having parties. Don't say I haven't warned you!"

Clarice escorted him to the door, and waved him gaily on his way.

"I wonder what his sister is like," mused Clarice—"socially, I mean. It makes all the difference what sort of a start one gets. These small towns are awfully cliquey. We can't afford to get ourselves classified with a lot of nobodies."

"I fancy she'll make a good stepping-stone!" said Simon as he went up-stairs.

§ 4

Mrs. Talcott did not call for nearly a week, and when she did, Clarice, to her chagrin, was out. If only she had been in and could have given Mrs. Talcott a cup of tea, probably they would have been asked to dinner

at once. As it was now, Clarice would be obliged to wait an appropriate interval before returning the call, and the opening of her social campaign would be that much delayed.

"I've got a line on her, though," she informed Simon. "I looked her up in the Boston 'Social Register,' and the professor in 'Who's Who.' The Talcotts are related to everybody. The dean has another sister who lives on Brush Hill in Milton—and a brother on Beacon Street. They belong to all the clubs. We'll get a flying start with them—even if we do start in Cambridge! That makes me think. Oughtn't you to join the Country Club?"

"If you are only starting in Cambridge, where do you intend to land?" inquired Simon drily.

"Boston—Pride's Crossing—maybe Newport. You never can tell. And, besides, knowing the right sort of people is bound to make a difference in the way you get on at the Law School. They say Harvard is a sort of family affair, anyway. I don't think I'll mention that you come from Boston, though. A prophet is never honored in his own country."

Clarice left cards on Mrs. Talcott exactly one week, to an hour, later, and in spite of the fact that the lady was not at home, reported herself as satisfied. The Talcotts lived in a vine-covered house on a near-by corner, with a porte-cochère and a garage which had originally been a stable. "It still has a dove-cot on it—fancy!" said Clarice. "And there's a lawn with copper beeches. I should say they probably had money. They don't keep a butler, though—only a maid—Irish at that!"

Simon, meeting the ex-dean in the yard, was assured by the latter of his sister's regret at having twice missed Mrs. Kent.

"I hope your wife won't find Cambridge too dull," he said. "You know there's not much of what you New Yorkers would call social life here. Everything is comparatively simple—no heavy entertaining, you know."

The expected invitation from the Talcotts arrived a few days later. Would Mr. and Mrs. Kent do them the honor of having supper with them the next Sunday evening at seven o'clock? The invitation was written upon plain paper, with Mrs. Talcott's name and address printed at the top in small blue type. Clarice was inclined to be rather snippy about it.

"I don't think much of her stationery. It looks like a dentist's letter-head! And seven! Whoever heard of dining at seven unless you're going to the theatre! It's probably an affectation of simplicity. Anyhow, I'm glad she 'came across' finally. I wouldn't be surprised if they had a real smart party for us. The dean is such a friend of yours, you know!"

Clarice occupied herself during the intervening period by unpacking all her trunks in an effort to decide what she should wear, finally selecting the low-cut black velvet she had worn the night of the opera, and on the day before, she went into Boston and had her hair waved at the Copley-Plaza. Simon refrained from any advice, although holding the private opinion that no dress like it had ever been seen on Brattle Street.

An explosion occurred on the evening of Mrs. Talcott's dinner when Simon came down-stairs in dinner-jacket and black tie.

"For heaven's sake, you can't wear that!" ejaculated Clarice. "Go back and put on your dress suit."

"Not if I know it! We're not going to a banquet. The mayor isn't going to present us with the keys of the city!"

"The party's for us!" she replied angrily. "We've got to be properly dressed, if nobody else is !"

"Who said it was for us?"

"Why, of course it is! Didn't the dean say so?"

"He said simply that his sister would ask us to her house."

"But you know *how* he said it. They're going to introduce us to all their friends. It will probably be the smartest party they can give. I won't have you wearing that old thing! You've got to make an impression. Everything turns on it!"

She stood tapping her foot angrily. Her trip to Boston in the crowded subway had got on her nerves. Simon sat down on the stairs and let her rave.

"They're important people socially," she went on, "even if they do live in Cambridge. These old families have a lot of real swank. If you go there in a Tuxedo they'll think you don't know who's who."

He grinned at her.

"Maybe you think so much about who's who you overlook what's what! How's that for a 'wise-crack'?"

"I know what's what a good deal better than you do! They might even think you didn't own a dress suit!"

"I should worry! Did you know that I used to take care of their furnace, too?"

"You!" She recoiled. "That's too terrible! Why didn't you tell me? I never would have gone!"

"Why not?"

"It would ruin us socially."

"They've invited us, haven't they? It isn't likely they'll ask me to go down cellar between courses."

"All the more reason for you to go properly dressed."

"But I am properly dressed!"

"All right, then! I won't go! Telephone that I'm sick."

She gave the portière a kick that filled the hall with dust.

"Oh, come, Clarice! You can't back out now. That really would put you in bad!"

"Not unless you take that thing off." She began shedding her wrap.

"Oh, well! I'll go in complete armor if you say so!"

Rather than inconvenience their hostess, Simon went up-stairs and changed.

"Don't you dare say anything about that furnace!" she warned him, as he rejoined her. "It would spoil everything! It's bad enough as it is!"

It was still broad daylight when they arrived at the Talcotts'. Clarice had insisted on telephoning for a taxi, although the distance to be traversed was hardly three hundred yards. Simon, in full evening dress, felt like a newly appointed diplomat about to be presented at a morning levee. Clarice had timed their start so that, as guests of honor, they should be the last to arrive, but she now discovered that owing to his having to redress it was already nineteen minutes past seven.

"Never mind! I don't care if we have kept them waiting. It's an unearthly hour, anyway!" she declared defiantly. "Come along!" Simon followed her. "Keep off that furnace!" was her final injunction.

§ 5

To Clarice's astonishment, the front door was opened by the hostess herself, a short, bustling woman in a gray silk dress, so old-fashioned that it resembled a *robe de*

style. Clarice wondered if all the Cambridge women bustled.

"How do you do, my dears! Come right in. I always answer the bell myself Sunday nights, because the girls insist on going out. Let me help you with your wrap!"

Simon saw her expression suddenly change as Clarice's inner costume was disclosed. His wife murmured something by way of apology about the taxi being late.

"Oh, it's quite all right, my dear! You're only a few minutes behind the rest. These things will happen sometimes."

The buzz of conversation in the parlor ceased abruptly upon their entrance, and it was impossible even for Clarice to misinterpret that sudden silence. In her startling velvet dress, her dangling ear-rings of green jade, her "Eton bob," the startling incongruity of her appearance in that informal assemblage was appalling—almost shameless. An elderly man with a gray beard, in a rusty frock coat and white four-in-hand tie, came forward and extended his hand.

"Glad to see you again, Kent! And this is Mrs. Kent? How do you do?"

Clarice, who had confidently expected to be introduced to a glittering assemblage of smart women and elegantly tailored men, saw four plainly dressed girls of about her own age, and an equal number of youths, only two of whom had on dinner-jackets. The third was arrayed in a cutaway; the fourth in a golf suit.

"My niece, Mrs. Phelps, and Professor Phelps—Professor and Mrs. Bodman—Mr. and Mrs. Fisk—Mr. Gale—and my other niece, Miss Forbes," said Mrs. Talcott. "Now, I think you know everybody!"

The ex-dean was not present, owing, his sister, ex-

plained, to his having been unexpectedly called to an educational conference in Washington, his place being filled by Mr. Philip Gale, of the English Department, a loose-jointed florid youth in mufti, with quizzical eyes and lackadaisical manner, which left Clarice in doubt as to whether he were serious or "spoofing." On the sofa sat a wiry, sunburned young woman, who carried herself with a free and easy air, suggestive of the tennis-court and the saddle, called Professor Talcott "Uncle Bob," and greeted Clarice and Simon familiarly, without getting up or even uncrossing her legs. Clarice took an instant dislike to her.

So this was Cambridge society! A bunch of "hicks"! The room itself struck Clarice as little less than shabby—as bourgeois and undistinguished as the guests. The unpolished painted floor with its scattered rugs, the upright ebony piano, draped with a piece of embroidery, the plaster casts, the framed photographs of Corinth and the Acropolis, the colored reproductions of Benozzo Gozzoli's murals in the Ricardi chapel, the souvenirs of travel, and the dingy portraits of commonplace-looking people on the walls made her think of a Theatre Guild setting for an Ibsen play. In these drab surroundings she was conscious of flaming like an Indian lily in a bed of iris. "Tiger, tiger, burning bright!" All that fuss for nothing! Simon, in his perfectly fitting dress suit, was almost as conspicuous among these down-at-the-heel pedagogues as herself. One glance at the men satisfied Clarice that they would never "be anything in her life"—or the women, either. Those rosy, open-faced girls, with their flat "a's," their last year's dresses half-way to their ankles—had she had her hair done just for them? There were evidently not even going to be any cocktails. Her previous anger—still smouldering—rekindled. Why had

she come? What was she going to say to this stuffy old man for the rest of the evening?

The stuffy old man offered Clarice his arm in the courtly fashion of a bygone era.

"The hiatus between the pantry and the parlor is due to the fact that we let our servants go out on Sunday nights," he explained, as he led the way to the dining-room. "We of Cambridge perpetuate the historic custom of what is called 'high tea.' But my wife, I am glad to say, possesses what the ancients called the '*scientia popinæ*'—the art of cookery."

"Mrs. Talcott's price is above rubies," lazily agreed Professor Phelps, who was on Clarice's right. "I'm proud to have her as an aunt, even if only by marriage."

The food was already on the table, and Professor Talcott proceeded at once to dish the sausages and scrambled eggs, both of which had become quite cold, while his wife, at the other end of the table, surrounded by a flotilla of cups, offered her guests the choice of coffee or chocolate. Sandwiches, rolls, cookies, layer-cake, chicken salad, ice-cream, and fruit completed the repast, to which they all helped themselves, the men removing the used plates and fetching others, which stood in piles, from the sideboard. Clarice, who had expected to hear the latest social gossip of Brookline and the North Shore, was surprised to learn that, with the exception of the golfer, all of those present had attended divine service. They even discussed the sermons. Clarice had not been to church since coming to Cambridge, and at first maintained a discreet silence. Why didn't they talk about something interesting! Her hostess, in an effort to include her in the conversation, inquired if she had as yet joined any congregation, to which Clarice replied, with a smile, that she had not and, in all likelihood, would not do so, since

she preferred "to worship God in the open air." She had intended her reply to be courteous, but there was a ring in her voice that made it seem defiant and a little condescending. Mrs. Talcott flushed and said nothing further, and the golfer turned the conversation by asking young Professor Bodman how he was getting on with his test of the Mendelian law.

"Don't start him on that!" warned his wife, an athletic-looking girl, with a wide, smiling mouth, white teeth, and heavily fringed amethyst eyes. "If you do he'll insist on telling you all about Marie Louise. I'm getting terribly jealous of her!"

Clarice pricked up her ears. A scandal? But hope died when she learned that Marie Louise was a mouse. Professor Bodman, a tawny Nordic in horn-rimmed goggles, put down his piece of layer-cake.

"It's just a little frolic of my own—nothing to do with my regular work," he explained apologetically. "I thought it would be fun to play a little with Weismann's theory—of the non-transmissibility of acquired characteristics. So I invested in a few pairs of white mice, guaranteed sound in wind and limb, and started a mousery in the conservatory——"

"Pardon! How did you identify them?" asked Gale. "I should think they'd have no more individuality than golf balls."

"Haven't golf balls individuality?" asked Mrs. Phelps. "I thought they all had names—and even titles. I'm sure they have individuality enough after I've played with them!"

"You clip their ears," answered Professor Bodman. "But at that you get to know them apart, after a while, just as you would anybody. I'm on my seventeenth generation now. I tried tail-cutting at first—everybody does

that—naturally with no result. Then I used an X-ray on them. My idea was to induce some internal molecular disturbance. I got no result for three generations, then"—he paused dramatically—"then—I got Marie Louise!"

Clarice was not interested in Marie Louise. She had not unpacked four Saratoga trunks and gone into Boston to have her hair waved, in order to hear about mice. She smiled patiently at Professor Talcott.

"Marie Louise," continued the professor, "was totally blind and lame in one foot. None of her immediate ancestors had been. I had manufactured a characteristic—a couple of characteristics! Would she transmit them?"

He was talking passionately now.

"I bred her to her first cousin, Napoleon Bonaparte. I got a totally blind mouse! Beatrice, I called her. I guarded that mouse as a vestal guards the sacred fire upon her altar. I mated her to her second cousin Dante. They had a blind mouselet—Mussolini!"

"'Three blind mice!'" chanted the sunburned girl. "'Three blind mice! See how they run!'"

The rest came in antiphonally.

> "Three blind mice!
> See how they run!
> See how they run!
> They all ran after the farmer's wife,
> Who cut off their tails with the carving-knife.
> Did you ever see such a sight in your life,
> As three blind mice!"

They shouted it like children, ending in a scattering burst of gay laughter. Simon had been as noisy as any of them. He seemed to be enjoying himself thoroughly, in spite of his dress suit. Clarice thought the whole per-

formance unutterably silly. Suppose that yellow "guy" could breed blind mice! Who wanted blind mice? She didn't propose to sit there like a bump on a log all the evening, when she ought to be leading the conversation. She would have liked to say something witty, but she had never heard of Weismann's theory or the Mendelian law—was not even sure how to pronounce the names. They would think her a "beautiful dumb-bell"—the one imputation she wished to avoid. Should she break in and swing the conversation to something really amusing? Just then—due to the singing, perhaps—the talk shifted to music and the last Boston Symphony Concert in Sander's Theatre.

"You must have heard wonderful music in New York, Mrs. Kent," said Miss Forbes. "I envy you that! We have only one orchestra here—while you have so many there. I suppose everybody has seats to at least one series."

Clarice, although she could strum a little upon the piano, had no real interest in music, as Simon had discovered when he had sought her companionship at the Philharmonic, but she naturally could not afford to admit it, particularly to Miss Forbes. In spite of meeting her at what she regarded as such a second-rate party, she sensed that this tanned girl had something smart about her.

"Oh, yes, indeed!" she responded, brightening for the first time and raising her voice above the others. "It's quite fashionable!"—adding, since she remembered the name—"particularly the Philharmonic."

"Then fashion is improving!" declared Professor Talcott. "When I lived in New York in the old days, the fashionable people—those who had boxes, at least—only went to the opera to talk."

"The opera is still 'eminently respectable,'" Clarice retorted, with an air of cleverness, "but the very smartest people go to concerts now and have the artists"—she pronounced the word *arteests*—"at their houses. You meet Bori and John McCormack and George Gershwin everywhere."

"Who is leading the Philharmonic now?" continued the other girl. "I understood they were contemplating a change of conductors."

It was a cruel question. Clarice caught her breath. They were all listening.

"They haven't definitely decided yet," she faltered. "They are trying various candidates."

"Whom do you favor, Mrs. Kent?" persisted Miss Forbes.

Clarice hesitated. Was the girl trying to put her in a hole? She could not "stall." She must name somebody. She could think of no conductor but Damrosch, and she felt sure he did not conduct the Philharmonic. Was it Campanini or Toscanini? Heaven help her! She plunged. She plunged gracefully, confidently, gloriously. Heaven helped her.

"Personally, I think Toscanini the greatest conductor in the world!" she said earnestly. She might just as well have said Campanari!

"How about Bodanzky?" shouted some one.

"And Stokowski?"

"Mengelberg!"

"Furtwangler!"

She was saved—"saved by the valor of Havelock—saved by the blessing of Heaven"! The table became a riot of argument. But a shock, as of a pail of cold water, descended upon her when she heard Mr. Talcott say in a low tone to Mrs. Bodman:

"You know, Miss Forbes keeps an apartment in New York just so that she can go in for the week-ends to hear the music."

Temporarily safe, Clarice took refuge in a seemingly appreciative silence. If only they would discuss something she knew about! But perversely they wouldn't! The talk ranged casually from the settlement of the international debt to John Sargent's latest mural paintings in the Public Library, the undeniable fading of pigment in his earlier portraits, the new biography of Mr. Henry James, and the comparative soundness of the theories of the curators of the New York and Boston Museums of Art. It appeared that these held strongly contrasting opinions with which most of Mrs. Talcott's guests were familiar and upon which they took sides vehemently. Clarice gathered that the Boston idea was to exhibit each work of art—ceramic, or plastic—as an integral piece of beauty, sufficient unto itself, while the New York theory was to collate them, with others of a like school or period, into an "exhibit" for educational purposes. From time to time Mrs. Talcott would seek to draw Clarice into the conversation by tossing a question at her regarding some subject with which presumably, as a New Yorker, she must be familiar. Clarice began to anticipate these with all the horror of a terror-stricken Paris awaiting its daily bombardment from "Big Bertha."

"How do you like the new American Wing, Mrs. Kent?" she asked politely. "I missed it the last time I was in New York."

Clarice, who had never seen the American Wing, hazarded the conservative statement that it was "very interesting—particularly the early Colonial." This precipated a technical debate upon period furniture, in which the literary golfer easily carried off the laurels. He

was, it seemed, a collector of note, a friend of Berenson's, and an art expert whose opinion was widely sought. Almost with relief, Clarice found the conversation veering from Chinese Chippendale and Italian Louis Seize back to biology. It hovered momentarily over Professor Robinson's unsuccessful attempts to breed a white fly, then veered unexpectedly to the apparently irrelevant subject of "Yoga," Hindoo philosophy, and the Veddas. A certain learned swami from Calcutta had been giving a course of lectures in Sander's Theatre on esoteric Buddhism, which had revived a dormant and phlegmatic interest in transcendentalism. Had he in effect, mused Professor Bodman, expounded anything that Emerson hadn't said as well or even better, fifty years ago?

"The swamis will get you if you don't watch out!" asserted Mr. Fisk, who sported the cutaway. "The turban excites an irresistible fascination for the female sex. It's the same everywhere. The sheiks of religion are as dangerous as those of the desert."

"I hear that there is quite a cult for Yoga in New York," hazarded Miss Forbes, again looking at Clarice, "and that it's getting to be the smart thing to spend a few weeks at Nyack at Pierre Bernard's Biophile Club. I believe he calls himself the 'High Priest of the Tantric Order of the Left Hand.' Have any of your fashionable friends 'fallen' for him yet, Mrs. Kent?"

As the resort in question had lately figured extensively in the daily press, Clarice was fairly well up on it, which gave her a chance to answer smartly:

"If 'fallen' is the word. I'm told the first thing his disciples are taught is how to stand on their heads!"

"An excellent method, I should say, of inculcating a philosophy which reverses the usual order of things!" remarked Professor Bodman.

"I'm told that a great many people find the exercises beneficial," said Clarice, who could not make out whether they were being serious or not.

"Oh, yes," nodded the professor solemnly. "We all recall:

"'A person who frequently chose
To sleep standing up on his nose,
When asked for a reason,
Said he thus got a season
Of very delicious repose.'"

"Don't forget the young lady of Crete," shouted Simon,

"'Who was so exceedingly neat,
When she got out of bed
She stood on her head
To make sure of not soiling her feet.'"

"Or," interjected Professor Talcott,

"'The well-known young lady of Brandon
Whose feet were too narrow to stand on,
So she stood on her head,
"My motto," she said,
"Has always been 'Nil desperandum.'"'"

"Perhaps they were all yogis in disguise!" suggested Clarice, with a brilliant glance about the table. So they were not so dead, after all! Especially the golfer, who gave furtive evidences of admiration. And, having focussed attention upon herself by her remark, she opened the jade case lying beside her, and, lighting a cigarette with studied carelessness, inquired generally:

"Do you know the one about the young lady from Niger?"

"Let's have it, by all means!" cried Mr. Gale, and

Clarice, pausing for proper effect, repeated the oldest limerick in the language, carefully articulating and over-emphasizing what seemed to her the important words:

"'There was a young lady of Niger,
Who went for a ride on a tiger:
They returned from the ride
With the lady inside,
And a smile on the face of the tiger!'"

There was an outburst of applause.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Gale, ostentatiously clapping his hands. "Tell us some more!"

"I've always liked the young lady from Niger!" said Miss Forbes innocently. "The French version is almost as good you know:

"'Il y avait une demoiselle de Nigre,
Qui sourit en se promenant à tigre:
De la course en rentrant
Voila la dame en dedans,
Et la sourire à la gueule du tigre.'"

Clarice, who knew only boarding-school French, was uncomfortable. She felt certain now that the Forbes girl was "kidding" her. And she suspected Mr. Gale. She decided that she did not like him, either. Stuck-up bunch of highbrows!

Professor Talcott, who had been enjoying the scene, now entered the arena.

"Permit me," said he modestly, "to supplement your modern literary versions with the classic:

"'Puella Regensis ridebat,
Quam tigris in tergo vehebat,
Externa profecta
Interna revecta,
Sed risus cum tigre manebat.'"

They all clapped this time.

"Isn't he wonderful!" cried Miss Forbes. "Uncle Bob has Latin and Greek translations for all of them. He can make them extempore—can't you, Uncle Bob?"

"Just a fad! An old man has to have some amusement!" he replied.

"Give us the one about 'the old man of Khartoum'," said his wife,

"Who kept two black sheep in his room;
'They remind me,' he said,
'Of two friends who are dead,'
But I cannot remember of whom.'"

"I'm afraid I can't remember it exactly," he laughed. "But how is this one?"

"Κλυτὸς ἦν τις ἀνὴρ ἀπὸ Φίσης
Ὧτων ποσοτῆτος ἀνίσης
Τὸ μὲν οὖν ὀλίγον,
Τὸ δ' ἀεθλοφόρον
Νεμέας πάρα καὶ παρα Πίσης."

Clarice applauded with the others. Now that they had started, it seemed to her as if they would never stop quoting limericks at one another. Miss Forbes chattered in French; Mr. Gale in Italian. Even Simon assisted with the famous "old party of Lyme,

"Who married three wives at one time,
When asked, 'Why the third?'
He replied, 'One's absurd,
And bigamy, sir, is a crime!'"

Clarice had subsided after her contribution about the young lady from Niger. She realized that it had been rather a *faux pas;* and she contented herself with smoking languidly, with a half-smile, as if she fully understood everything that was said, but was only mildly amused

by it. She was desperately aware, however, that she was not pulling her weight, and that she floated at all only because these good-natured people were carrying her along with them on the tide of their own high spirits. And because they were friendly and intelligent and simple she scorned and hated them. Imagine them at the Ambassador, or the Lido-Venice, or the Opera! At one of her own smart little dinners! "There was an old man of Khartoum!" Chinese Chippendale! Blind mice! Art museums! Jokes in Latin! Bah!

Simon, at the other end of the table, beside Mrs. Talcott, felt thoroughly at home. Although he had never met any of these people before, he felt sure of their kindliness, their intellectual honesty, their accurate sense of values, their general decency. "Nice people!" He had been as one of them from the moment he entered the house. Even Miss Forbes seemed to have "taken a shine" to him, although he was fully conscious of her subtle digs at Clarice. How had she managed to size her up so soon! If she had an apartment in New York, she might easily know Muriel Hungerford, and, hence, all about Clarice. He would have liked to ask her if she knew Vira.

Just as Clarice had disdainfully contrasted this homely meal with the luxurious entertainments to which she was accustomed in New York, Simon mentally compared the men and women present with those who had been wont to grace their board—with the sleek, capon-like Davis, with the braggart and blustering Buckley Thorn, with old Robinson, with Doris Menken and Gladys Munson—even with swells like Mrs. Rynall. How tawdry and valueless they seemed! As cheap and tinsel as the woman who bore his name, and who now sat smoking rather insolently, he thought, hardly making an effort

to speak to her host or the man on the other side of her. How could he ever have loved a creature as false and flippant as that?

Mrs. Talcott pushed back her chair.

"Now don't stay out too long!" she warned them. "Sally Forbes has promised to play some Stravinski for us. Perhaps I can persuade Mrs. Kent to favor us, also. I'm sure she plays."

Clarice smiled disingenuously.

"Thank you! I never play in public," she said.

In the other room the women divided into two groups, and Clarice found herself in that composed of her hostess and the latter's niece, Mrs. Phelps, and Mrs. Fisk. To her relief, Miss Forbes had sought out her old place on the sofa and was talking to Mrs. Bodman. There was something about the freshness and simplicity of these two young women, to whom she was now forced to make herself agreeable, that annoyed Clarice. She wondered if they were so ingenuous and modest, after all. She was contemptuous of athletic women, anyway; they had no allure. And allure was the only thing that counted. Mrs. Talcott must have been pretty once—the dairy-maid type. No allure, either! Milk and cheese, and bread-and-butter, and bed at ten o'clock! What a life they must lead! And how had they ever got a man to look at them! She lit another cigarette. None of the others were smoking, except Miss Forbes. Mrs. Talcott made coffee in a Viennese coffee-machine and they poured it out for themselves.

"Isn't the room rather cool?" she asked, and, as Clarice seemed to think it was, she opened the register beside the door. "These old hot-air furnaces heat up the house so! And yet in winter we need them on that very account!"

She came and sat down between the two girls and Clarice.

"How is Henry, Alice? I hope he's better?"

Mrs. Phelps gave a discouraged smile.

"This is his fourth week and he doesn't show the slightest sign of improvement," she said. "The doctor gave him the usual injection. It's supposed to mitigate the violence of the disease, but it hasn't seemed to in his case."

"What has your child got?" inquired Clarice.

"Whooping-cough—his spasms are simply frightful!"

"Alice has the most beautiful little boy!" explained her aunt. "We all adore him. He was four years old in March. Up to that time he had had no contagious diseases whatever—but he celebrated his birthday by coming down with whooping-cough. I tell Alice it's better to have it and get it over with now, than to have it to look forward to later on. But that doesn't seem to comfort her!"

"Not when I see him suffer so!" said the child's mother.

Clarice instinctively moved away from her. What a nerve the woman had going out into society! The girl saw the involuntary movement and resented it.

"You needn't be afraid. One can't carry it," she said.

"My brother tells me that you have a little boy of your own," interposed Mrs. Talcott quickly. "How old is he?"

Clarice's expression did not change.

"My husband and I have no children of our own," she answered stiffly. "My husband has an adopted son of eight, who lives with us." They were all interest immediately.

"Has he had whooping-cough?"

"I don't know. That's why I don't want to take any chances. Anyhow, *I* haven't. I'm not particularly anxious to get it, either! They say it's extremely dangerous for adults—fatal sometimes. Are you doing anything to protect yourself?"

"I've had a couple of injections. The doctors are very skeptical about them."

"Do you think you ought to be going around among people?"

"The doctor says that there isn't the slightest possibility of my giving it to anybody so long as I haven't got it myself—and he examines me every time he comes."

"I don't think you need to be worried, Mrs. Kent," interposed Mrs. Talcott.

"Where does your adopted son go to school?" asked the Fisk girl.

"At Mr. Channing's."

"Where did he go in New York?"

"The University School on West Seventy-second Street."

"Oh, the 'Dalton Plan'!" they both exclaimed in unison. "How do you like it?"

"I like it well enough," answered Clarice, who, in addition to her fear of whooping-cough, not only had forgotten what the Dalton Plan was but, by this time, was thoroughly bored.

"It's so radical! Do you think the scheme has been sufficiently tried out?"

"I don't know."

"But does it seem to agree with your boy? Do you like it in his case? Has he developed more rapidly than in the ordinary schools?"

"I really can't say!" drawled Clarice. "It seems to agree with him all right."

"Alice is tremendously interested in bringing up children," said her aunt approvingly. "She has even written an appendix to Doctor Holt's famous book on their care and feeding."

"Oh, Aunt Ellen!" protested the girl.

"We're all very proud of her!" continued Mrs. Talcott. "She's made a regular study of elementary education besides. Are you in favor of the Montessori idea, Mrs. Kent, or do you believe in greater discipline?"

"I'm for discipline," said Clarice conservatively.

"I only wrote that appendix," explained Alice, "because when Henry was born, as I could afford only one servant, I decided to get a general housework girl instead of having a nurse, and take care of the baby myself. So I thought it was worth while making a record of my experiences in putting Doctor Holt's theories into practice.

Clarice had never cared for babies, regarding motherhood as a stupid function, for women who had ceased to be attractive. But, unfortunately, the other three ladies assumed, as a matter of course, that, as David's foster-mother, Clarice must be keenly interested in everything pertaining to the rearing of children, and they were clearly intent on profiting by her experience, cross-examining her minutely upon the diseases with which he had been afflicted, particularly his convalescences. She did the best she could, although some of her ideas seemed rather to bewilder them! Once they had got upon the subject it seemed impossible for them to leave it. Clarice made no pretense of following the discussion, or of suppressing a slight yawn or two. If only the men would come in, or the women at least stop this eternal talk about milk and babies. Why didn't they try to find out what she was interested in and give her a chance to talk

about it? Well, it was nothing to her if these suburban blue-stockings had never heard of New York or Long Island or Newport. She had sat for two hours and a half with hardly a word to say for herself; without any opportunity to air her knowledge of society. Why hadn't she worn an afternoon dress! She was furious lest that sarcastic Mr. Gale, who thought so much of himself, or that "snooty" Miss Forbes should think her a pretentious nobody—"all dressed up and nowhere to go"! She'd show them that she had plenty of places to go! But the three women with whom she was sitting exhibited such a consuming interest in David's present and future welfare as to eliminate all possibility of talking about herself. To their surprise, Clarice had made no plans for sending David to boarding-school, and, for her benefit, they attacked the problem with vigor. There were, they said, so many excellent schools, but each had its own particular merits and defects. Now Groton—! They were analyzing these, seriatim, when the men came in from the dining-room. Mr. Gale, upon whom Clarice seemed to exert a peculiar charm, sauntered toward them, hands in pockets.

"What's the subject before the league of women voters?" he asked.

"Babies, as usual," answered Alice Phelps contritely. "I'm afraid we've bored Mrs. Kent to tears. They're not very engrossing to one who has never had any."

"I like babies and enjoy talking about them—in moderation!" said Clarice. "But I do think there are other things worth mentioning. I've never understood why women should be expected to sacrifice themselves entirely to their children. They've a duty toward society to make themselves attractive. Don't you think so, Mr. Gale?"

"I do, indeed!" returned the connoisseur-golfer.

"Thus encouraged, may I be permitted to say that I have rarely met any one who so adequately performed that duty as yourself?"

Simon, entering at that instant with the host, saw Clarice turn, so as to face the rest of the circle into which the men, with the exception of Mr. Gale, had drawn chairs. It was the moment when an after-dinner assemblage either breaks up into small groups or gathers naturally about some interesting or distinguished figure. He knew from her expression that Clarice intended to be that figure—to do or to die. He was uncertain what her motive was. Certainly she had had no encouragement to thrust herself forward. She must know that these people were her intellectual superiors. That, with all their apparent simplicity, they knew more of the world than she did. Would she attempt to score off them out of sheer vanity? Or was it pique? With her face in a fixed simper, she swung round the circle, listening for a cue. It came from close at hand.

"What a wonderful dance that was of the Calders last Thursday night!" exclaimed Mrs. Bodman. "I never saw so many lovely dresses! I danced until five o'clock. Pretty good for an old married woman like me! I heard that a lot of people came on from New York and Philadelphia—even Washington."

"I was so sorry to miss it!" sighed Alice Phelps. "But I couldn't leave Henry!"

"You mean the Brookline Calders?" Clarice addressed the entire party now. "I know the New York Calders, of course. I wonder who came on?"

"I saw Ava Joyce there," answered Gale—"and one or two of the Westbury outfit."

"Oh, dear! Was Ava here and I didn't know it? I wish I'd seen her!" cried Clarice ostentatiously. "She's

one of my most intimate friends! So is her sister Esther. Esther King, you know! Her husband is the famous polo-player. Did you notice her there, by any chance?"

Nobody appeared to have noticed Esther there, but she had served her purpose and Clarice had the floor to herself.

"I stayed with Esther at Newport during Tennis Week last summer," she informed them lightly. "Do many Boston people go to Newport?"

"Only the descendants of those who originally bought real estate there from the Aquidnecks," said Professor Talcott.

"I love Newport," gushed on Clarice. "We were planning to take a house there this summer, when Simon was asked to fill this place at the Law School. Perhaps we shall, even now. One gets so dependent upon one's friends, and everybody goes to Newport—including the Long Island set."

"Do you see much of them?" asked Gale eagerly.

"Oh—all the time! We almost always run down over Sunday. And during the week we dine together and play bridge, or go to the play and dance afterwards."

"What I've never been able to understand," declared Gale, who seemed to be acting as interlocutor, "is how, what with dancing all night and playing bridge all day, you smart New Yorkers ever manage to do any work."

"Oh, we don't pretend to be smart ourselves," said Clarice modestly—"although we know a lot of smart people. Going out is all part of the game in New York. A man has to. Even if he does get tired, he keeps in the procession."

"But isn't that sort of life frightfully expensive? How can young married people afford it?" asked Fisk.

"Of course it's expensive," admitted Clarice. "Most

of them have money to start with. Those that don't, have to earn it. New York is the city of opportunity. I confess I have misgivings when I think what Simon has sacrificed. He'd been in New York less than five years and was earning between thirty and thirty-five thousand dollar a year——"

"Oh, come, Clarice!" interrupted Simon indignantly.

"Yes, you were!" she protested. "My husband is so modest——"

She was about to expatiate upon her husband's modesty when, unexpectedly, she began to cough. A thin haze of smoke, clearly discernible against the ceiling lights, was spreading throughout the room. Clarice's coughing proved infectious.

"It's that miserable old furnace!" ejaculated Mrs. Talcott, moving toward the register, while Professor Phelps threw open one of the windows. "Whenever the wind swings to the east it always begins to smoke."

Suddenly Clarice, to her horror, saw Simon vanish into the hall, pursued by their host. The smoke cleared, but the conversation was dead. Simon's earning capacity in New York did seem rather a personal matter. Clarice fingered her handkerchief, vainly hoping that some one would relieve the awkwardness of the situation, but what relief there was came from an unexpected quarter. The register by the door began to emit grotesque noises. Somebody was tinkering vigorously with the furnace below. The noise continued intermittently for a couple of minutes.

"Why the devil haven't you had it fixed?" came from the cellar in hollow tones, recognizable as those of an erstwhile rising young New York attorney. "That broken draught is just as I left it six years ago!"

"Because I was fool enough to think I could find an-

other furnace-man as good as you were !" answered the voice of Professor Talcott.

Rumbles of subterranean laughter followed this interchange. Clarice turned hastily to Mrs. Talcott.

"Where do you spend your summers?" she asked faintly.

There was a heavy stamping below stairs. Professor Talcott reappeared, followed by Simon, his hair rumpled, his shirt, face, and hands covered with coal-dust.

"Simon!" cried Clarice aghast. "What on earth have you been doing!" But she knew only too well.

"Service!" apprised Professor Talcott, with a gesture toward his bedraggled guest. "Permit me to introduce to you by long odds the best furnace-man of my large and varied acquaintance. I thought I'd lost him! Heaven has sent him back!"

The burst of laughter which greeted this announcement sounded to Clarice like a chorus of mocking devils. She felt flat as a punctured tire. The situation was intolerable.

"I think I'd better take my husband home and give him a bath!" she said, offering her hand to Mrs. Talcott. "Thank you so much for having us! I've had a perfectly lovely time!" She nodded to Mrs. Phelps and Mrs. Fisk. "I hope I shall see you both soon! Good night all!"

"Won't you wait to hear Miss Forbes play?" begged Mrs. Talcott.

"Thank you so much, but really I feel that I should be getting home!" answered Clarice.

No sound emanated from the parlor as Professor Talcott helped her into her wrap and bade them good-night. In silence they descended the steps and walked along Brattle Street. Simon could feel the gathering of the

storm and recognized the hush preceding it. Clarice stalked along the concrete pavement through the darkness, as if unconscious of his existence. It was only ten minutes past nine when they reached their gate.

Here's where he'd get it! He lit a cigarette and crunched after her up the cinder path, into the hall. Against the background of shabby woodwork and grotesque furniture, she looked like some exotic bird of the tropics.

She stopped and stood with her back to him at the foot of the stairs. It seemed to Simon as if she were lashing an invisible tail from side to side.

"I suppose you thought that smart!" she said, without turning round, making the sibilants hiss. "You tried to make a fool of me! Well, you succeeded, if that's any comfort to you!"

Her shoulders quivered and her fingers drummed on the banister-rail.

"I'm sorry things didn't go to suit you, Clarice!" he replied. "Why shouldn't I have fixed the furnace for them? They thought all the more of me for it—and of you, too—or they would have, if you'd taken it the right way. You don't understand that kind of people!"

She pivoted on him, her eyes blazing, ready to spring.

"No! And I don't want to! Do you suppose I've worked hard all this time for that sort of thing? I have not! I don't want to live in a baby-clinic or a biological laboratory, or the 'American Wing.' I don't want to spend the best years of my life among a bunch of 'hicks' that don't know Newport from Flatbush, or a high-ball from a golf-ball. Do you suppose I'd be willing to stay in a dump like this? Not much I wouldn't! What's the matter with you? You must be nutty to throw away everything like this! Look what you were when I married

you—and what I made of you! You didn't have a cent! You didn't even know how much ability you had. Well, I was the one that made them see what you were worth to them. I sold you to old Robinson. I made them give you your first raise. I made them split fees with you. I'd have had you earning fifty thousand dollars by the end of next year, with a place in the firm—'Robinson, Myer, Burr & Kent.' It would have sounded pretty good, wouldn't it? You didn't know a living soul in New York, that anybody had ever heard of—not one! I introduced you to every one worth knowing. Do you realize that in one year we broke into the smartest set on Long Island, got on intimate terms with people that every one in America is dying to know? By next winter we'd have been in the very innermost circle! We'd have had a place at Westbury and a house at Newport for July and August, and we'd have gone to Palm Beach or Miami every winter. We'd have had everything we wanted——"

"That *you* wanted!"

"That *you'd* want, if you had any sense! Honest, I think you've got bats in your belfry! You've gone and chucked what most men would have worked a lifetime for, in order to come to this half-baked burg and lecture to a lot of pimply boys! You've given up thirty-five thousand dollars a year for a salary of twenty-four hundred! You've given up a nice little modern apartment on Park Avenue for this chamber of horrors—this ash-can! Well, live in it, if you want to! But you'll have to get along without me! The trouble with you is that you're selfish—you never think of anybody but yourself! Well, stay here! Stay here in this dump-heap and make up limericks with these small-town highbrows, and breed blind mice and grow a beard like old papa Talcott—and rot! But you'll stay alone! I wash my hands of you!

I can take care of myself. I can go back to New York and go right on, from where we left off, better without you than with you! I've had enough! I'm through with you—until you come to your senses. I'm going!"

She turned away from him dramatically and started up-stairs. Could she really be going? He stared at her slowly ascending back—that beautiful back with its two dimples, which he had last seen in the front of the box at "I Pagliacci." Could Clarice—really—be *going?*

"Good-bye, Clarice!" he murmured sotto-voce. She did not look back. She meant it!

With an incredulous expression upon his face, he collapsed upon the Swiss chair. With a click it burst gaily into tinkling song:

"Ach du lieber Augustin— Augustin— Augustin!
Ach du lieber Augustin! Alles ist hin!
Gelt ist hin! 's Mädel ist hin!
Alles hin! Alles hin!
Ach du lieber Augustin! Alles ist hin!"

Alles ist hin! Everything's gone!

"I suppose you think that's funny, too!"

Simon could not repress the quip modest.

"Yep!" he said. "I do!"

The only question that disturbed him was whether Clarice would attempt to take David with her. Were her legal rights as a natural mother superior to his as an adopted father? Was she a natural mother or an unnatural one? He made up his mind that she should not have the child without a fight—nor would he let David out of his sight until she had gone!

He sent a note to the principal of David's school, requesting that he be excused for the day, and kept him at the Law School throughout the morning, lunched with

him at a cafeteria in Harvard Square, and then took him to a baseball game on Soldiers' Field. It was after five when they reached home.

The gate and the storm-door both stood open and there were deep footprints on the cinder path. The hall was empty of trunks. Could Clarice have gone—already? He rushed up to her room. There was nothing in it besides the furniture, except a few dented pasteboard boxes and odd pieces of tissue-paper. Not even a note, pinned after the traditional fashion, upon her pin-cushion! She had taken the pin-cushion. Simon leaped down-stairs again to the kitchen, where Ellen, with bare, flour-covered arms, was standing in front of the table, rolling pastry. She did not look at him.

"Where's Mrs. Kent?" he demanded of her.

The cook imperturbably scattered a sifting of flour over the flattened dough, then slowly turned an inscrutable masque in his direction. He could not be sure whether there was a gleam in that turtle's eye of hers or not.

"She's wint!" she grunted without a blink. "Good riddance to bad rubbish!" he thought he heard her mutter, as she resumed her work.

The half-gods had gone.

CHAPTER XV

§ 1

The half-gods had gone—would the gods arrive? He suppressed his impulse to write to Vira and tell her what had happened. He must wait until the situation clarified itself. Clarice might change her mind—come back! Several times within the next few weeks he was severely tempted to send Vira a picture post-card—just a line asking how she was and hinting almost casually that his wife had left him—in the hope that she would either write or suggest a meeting. But to what end? Suppose they did meet under present circumstances, could anything come of it but torture and, possibly, misunderstanding? Who could tell how long Clarice would stay away or whether she had really gone for good?

But as the days stretched into weeks and the weeks lengthened into a month, with no word from Clarice, it began to look, even to Simon, as though, for good or ill, she had gone! He could picture her alone, in New York, a beautiful grass-widow, flitting Ritzily from roof-garden to roof-garden, from house-party to house-party; could hear her remarking with that dazzling smile of hers: "Oh, I've just run over for a little holiday before going to Newport. Cambridge is *so* dull, socially, I mean—otherwise it's quite beautiful. Simon has to work *so* hard. They absolutely depend on him at the Law School. Of course, there is a smart set in Boston—people like the Calders and Sally Forbes, and clever men like Philip Gale—and we tap Brookline and the North Shore—but

it's not New York! Those people spend half their time over here, anyway. So, after all, I'm just following the fashion by leaving Simon for a week or so."

He wondered who it was now! Was she still running Buckley Thorn, had she resurrected Davis, or was she giving old Robinson a whirl? Now that she was alone, she might very well take on the latter. He had plenty of money! What would her future be? Of one thing he felt confident, it would be a glittering one—luxurious, safe, theatrical! And how would it affect his own? Would she ultimately set him free? Could she ever afford to divorce him when their marriage so effectually obscured her past? From now on, wherever she went, whatever part she played upon the social stage, she always would be referred to as "the beautiful Mrs. Simon Kent, of New York, wife of the lawyer, you know. They're not living together. She likes society and he doesn't. One child—it's with him, I believe!"

Would it be with him? Clarice could never make legal claim to the boy without publicly avowing the circumstances of his paternity! She must let him have David, but she would never divorce him—and both for the same reason!

Whatever her intentions, she clearly did not regard them as any of Simon's business. David rarely referred to her, and then without regret or even interest as to her whereabouts. To such as inquired, and they were but few, Simon explained that his wife had gone to visit her mother in New York. He hoped that it was in New York, and trusted that it was to her mother! He wrote long letters to Otto, in which he inveighed against the established conventions of society and asserted his right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of his own happiness in his own way. Under what rational theory, in either law

or morals, should he be held bound for life to a woman like Clarice? At times, in the desperation of his longing for Vira, he worked himself into a fine frenzy of rage—almost of eloquence—in which he pictured himself after the fashion of St. Paul:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

"Dear Otto," he wrote. "You know the whole thing! I've tried to play fair, and I think I have! I've stood to my guns. I haven't sold out to anybody! I've told the truth. I've given the other fellow the benefit of the doubt and treated him as I'd have wanted him to treat me, provided he was decent enough to do it. And now—just as dad said—I've got it in the neck! Well, I don't care! That's how I want to play the game. I'd rather die than not be on the square with people. I don't want anything from them I don't pay for. I'd rather be a giver than a getter, but—once I've done that—I'm going to live with the woman I love and not with one I don't. Love is the biggest thing in the world and I'm not going to be cheated out of it by any academic theory that marriage is an indissoluble contract. I don't believe that, in the eyes of God, I'm married to Clarice Hungerford at all. She lied to me and 'played me for a sucker.' As a contract it's void for fraud. I don't care just what the statutes are in this particular place where I happen to live. I do know that there are plenty of States which have enough common sense and fairmindedness to say that when a fellow was tricked into marriage the way I was, he ought to be set free. And even if there weren't, I'm going to spend my life with the woman I love, if she'll have me. I'm going to live with her, anyway—and marry her if I can! And any bird who wants to throw a stone at Simon Kent—well, let him!"

But he tore it up next morning. There should be no Clarice business in his relations with Vira.

Otto's letters gave him the news of the day. It appeared that Robinson, Myer & Burr had managed to survive his defection and were still doing business at the old stand, but that, to everybody's surprise, Mr. Hepper had at last been made a member of the firm and gone on the "water-wagon" for good; that the trial of the great Hammersly will case had gone over until the autumn, the contestants now claiming that, in addition to being a "senile dement," the testatrix had been "unduly influenced" in the disposition of her property by none other than Judge Isaac Furman; that Ora Spong and Emmeline Ricketts had both been married—Ora to a professional cabaret dancer named Gonzales da Gamba, who came from Santiago de Cuba, and Emmeline to a retired letter-carrier, who was said to beat her; that their rooms at Mrs. McGowan's having been thus rendered tenantless by matrimony, he had rented the same and was now living there in luxury as Absolute Monarch of the Bath; that their old flat on the top of the house had been empty ever since Clarice and Simon had left it; that Davis Pettibone had achieved an insidious notoriety in connection with some sort of polite blackmail scheme, had been haled before the Grand Jury, and, it was rumored, might be indicted; that Mother Hungerford had come into a little money, owing to the unexpectedly sudden termination of a life estate, and had rented the apartment formerly occupied by them near Park Avenue; that Clarice seemed to be visiting her; that he had seen her twice at the theatre, each time with a different escort; and—that he occasionally saw Miss Vira Bradley, and that she was looking exceptionally attractive.

Superficially, at least, the person most affected by Clarice's departure was Ellen, who, from being grudging, morose, and taciturn, had become bustling, smiling, and voluble, somewhat suggesting a motherly hippopotamus. Coincidently the quality of her cooking improved, as did the amount of her housework. Simon took all his meals with David, walking home with him from school for lunch, and remaining there in the afternoons instead of returning to the library of the Law School. It was difficult to make himself believe that he had ever been away from Cambridge. His false start in New York, his experiences with Robinson, Myer & Burr, his hectic life with Clarice took on for him the unreal character of a fast-fading nightmare. As the spring advanced and the door-yards of Brattle Street were flecked with dogwood and magnolia, the warm air pungent with the acrid scent of freshly cut grass, the elms and maples bursting into full leaf, he would often take David in the late afternoons and stroll through the college-yard.

"There's where I used to room, son," he would say, looking up at the window in Stoughton where, six years before, he had sat and read his grandfather's manuscript. "See that crack in the lower pane? I made it throwing a shoe at the fellow I lived with—your Uncle Otto—and it hasn't been mended yet! Everything's just the same!"

Finding the door ajar one afternoon, they peeped into the dusky shadows of Sander's Theatre, where Simon, to David's huge delight, vaulted upon the stage and satirically delivered a portion of "The Defence of Lucknow:"

"Millions of musket-balls and thousands of cannon-balls—
But ever aloft on the palace roof the old banner of England blew!"

"Did you win a big prize?" called David, clapping energetically from the balcony.

"No—a colored man won it!"

"I bet he wasn't as good as you were!" asserted David loyally.

"He wasn't!" admitted Simon.

They followed the clouded mirror of the Charles, with the distant smoke-haze of Boston hanging over the dun marshes, watched the crews sweeping by, and listened to the hoarse yells of the coach:

"Stroke! Stroke! Heads up, everybody! Hands closer, Number Five. All together now! Stroke! Stroke!"

They went to ball-games and track-meets, and, on rare occasions, to the "movies," and once, on a Sunday afternoon, to Louisburg Square, where Simon pointed out to David the narrow brick house where he had been born. The sunlight was shining on the spotless windows as of yore, and it was just the same, except that there was a pot of yellow tulips in the bay window, and the present tenant had painted the woodwork of the front door a pale green. With a swelling throat Simon gazed up at the windows of his mother's room. He almost expected to see his father's lanky form come swinging round the corner! His grandfather's fragile figure descending the steps, with a book under his arm! Rudesheim and Stepp—and "Karl," the dachshund! Dear ghosts of an ever-living past!

§ 2

Simon's lectures at the Law School came to an end, and the examinations drew near, yet, although she had been gone six weeks, Clarice had not communicated with

him. He had been asked to give some courses in the Summer School and had readily consented, but Summer School would not commence for another three weeks. A humid, sizzling heat enveloped Cambridge. The concrete was soft under foot, Brattle Street was shadowed by the full arch of elms, locusts rasped a challenge to the whirr of the surface-cars, and through open windows rows of coatless backs could be seen bending doggedly over blue-books. At night the tinkle of guitar and mandolin came faintly from the yard, interspersed with "Here's a health to King Charles!" and "There's a long, long trail a-winding, to the land of my dreams!"

With the hiatus in his activity Simon grew restive. For nearly three months now he had followed the scholastic life, with all his attention concentrated upon his work. At first the relief from money-grubbing had been immense, his health had improved; he loved the quiet, restful atmosphere, the leisure to trace an elusive legal principle to its source, he liked his association with the faculty and the bright young fellows in his classes, but now that he had time to pause, he was disconcerted to find that, in addition to his heart-sickness for Vira, he could not escape a feeling that life was passing him by. All these hundreds of keen-faced chaps he met in the yard and on the steps of Austin Hall were getting ready for something, were going somewhere! They were girding themselves to take part in the struggle of life outside—and, rather curiously, real life seemed to him just as much "outside" as it had six years ago, before he had joined the A. E. F. or gone with Otto to New York. Harvard—the Law School—was just a training-camp. Its only purpose was to fit men for battle. In a few days now Class Day and Commencement would be there, and for a moment the eyes of the educated world would turn

toward Cambridge and New Haven and Princeton and Hanover. Why? Because the new volunteers would be starting for the war. It was for them that the bands would play and the handkerchiefs be waved—not for those who stayed behind. However necessary his present occupation, which, truly, was the greater service—to lecture upon the theory of the law or to see that it was properly applied and practised in an honorable way?

It was fine to be a teacher, all right to give your life to the service of youth—but how about your own youth? A fellow could live only once!

They had been to a ball-game one afternoon, and Simon, holding David by the hand, was crossing the yard, when, at the gate by Harvard Hall, they came face to face with Garry and Vira. The confrontation was so unexpected that Simon, with all his joy at seeing her, found himself weak in the knees.

"Vira!" he stammered. "*You* here!"

"Why, Simon! How nice to meet you! And there's David! Hello, David! Will you give me a 'ransom'?"

David, smiling from ear to ear, hung his head.

"Are you glad to see me?" she asked, bending over to kiss him.

He nodded vigorously. The roar in his ears drowned that of the surface-cars.

"Where are you staying? Are you going to be here long?"

"Just a couple of hours. I'm on my way to Mt. Desert to open the house for the summer. I leave at ten o'clock to-night."

"I'd no idea she was coming until I got her wire this afternoon—otherwise I'd have let you know," explained Garry.

"I'm afraid I've horribly interrupted his studies," she said.

"Won't you both come home and have supper with me? My wife is away, but I'm sure Ellen can pick up something."

"Goody!" exclaimed David. "Do come, Aunty Vira!"

"I'd love to!" she exclaimed. "Can't we, Garry?"

"I don't know that I ought. I've got a 'real property' exam to-morrow morning, and I should spend every minute from now until midnight boning up on the Rule against Perpetuities."

"Then *you* come, Vira!"

"Let me beat it," said Garry. "I really can't take the time. Go ahead with Simon, Vira. He can take you into Boston and put you on the train as well as I can. You must have a lot to talk over. You can get on without me."

She looked at Simon. Not even a savage could have refused the prayer in his eyes.

"All right! Good-bye, Garry! How soon will you be coming up to Northeast?"

"In a couple of weeks. Be sure the 'Cap' has the *Cyrrus* in shape by the time I get there. I ordered a new suit of sails, you know. Well, so long!"

"Good luck in your exams!" she called after him as the boy strode toward the Law School.

David seized a hand of each, and they walked slowly along Craigie Street with the child between them. It was one of those evenings of misty gold that descend on towns by the sea. A yellow sheen bathed the bright green lawns. Faint twitterings came from the lilac bushes. Robins ran, paused with a jerk, and hurried on. Sparrows chattered in the vaultings of the elms above

their heads. To the west, where the river coiled among the marshes, a fan of iridescence spread into a sky that might have been painted by a celestial Turner. A postman plodded past and two boys in bare legs and running-drawers dashed by.

"I'd love to live in a place like this!" said Vira. "It's so lovely and peaceful."

"Not if you were alone!" he answered.

"We've got a squirrel at our house!" announced David. "He's only got half a tail. He's the one that used to be in Central Park, I think. And we've got a chair that plays a tune!"

"Really! I can't wait to see everything!" she cried.

They ate on a card-table on the porch, served by the heavy-footed Ellen, and afterwards Vira, simulating terror, sat upon the Swiss chair.

"*Ach, du lieber Augustin! Augustin! Augustin!*"

Then David dragged her up-stairs to see the rest of the house.

"If you spend the night you can sleep in my mama's room," he said. "She's gone away, you know. Please stay!"

Had the gods arrived?

They sat on opposite sides of David's little bed and heard him say his prayers, kissed him good-night, and descended to the library. Without a word Simon closed the doors and took Vira in his arms.

"My darling!" he cried, as, for the first time she yielded herself to him without reserve.

"My Simon!" she whispered. "I've missed you so! Beloved!"

"Oh, Vira! I can't live a minute longer without you!"

"Nor I without you!"

"What are we going to do?"

"I don't know! I don't care! I love you! That's all that matters!"

"I know it is! But—" He paused.

"I leave it all to you, Simon! I'll do whatever you say!"

She clung to him, with her eyes closed in perfect confidence. Darkness had fallen. Only a distant arc-light from the street showed the outlines of the furniture. He could feel her heart fluttering against his.

"I must make a confession," she faltered. "Our meeting this afternoon wasn't exactly an accident. Garry spent last Sunday with us in New York and told me about Clarice leaving you six weeks ago. So I made up my mind I just had to see you! I came to Cambridge on purpose. Getting the cottage ready was merely an excuse. If we hadn't met, I intended to get rid of Garry somehow and come here—or maybe to bring him with me. I don't know! That part of it wasn't important. The main thing was—to see you again—immediately—just as soon as I heard that you were free!"

"But I'm not free, sweetheart—yet!"

"Your wife has left you!"

"She's still my wife. We're not divorced. She may never divorce me!"

"If she has left you, she has no more claim on you."

"But I can't marry!"

She rested her head upon his shoulder.

"We don't have to marry, Simon. We love each other! We can go on loving each other! The details aren't important."

He struggled with himself.

"Listen, Vira! I've thought this all out. I want you. You know that! I want you more than anything in the

world. I want to be with you every minute of the day—to eat with you and work with you and sleep with you. I want to feel you in my arms the last thing before I go to sleep and to see your face on the pillow beside me when I wake up in the morning. I want to be part of you! But, even though you feel as I do, it can't be—yet!"

"Oh, Simon! Not when she has abandoned you?"

"No. It wouldn't be fair to you, dear! And it wouldn't be sensible. I might have felt differently once—I have even lately, at times—but I don't now. If you were older it would be different, but no man has a right to let a girl of your age take the chance of ruining herself—without time to think it over. Look at Clarice! She ought to be a lesson to us. Do you suppose I'm going to put you in that position just because you love me? I'd be all kinds of a cad if I did."

"But supposing she doesn't come back and still refuses to divorce you?"

"That's different. But I've got to give her a reasonable time to change her mind. She's only been gone six weeks. If she stays away a year, it will be another matter. In that case we can decide what to do when the time comes—if you still love me as you do now."

"Silly!" She put her arms around his neck. "I shall go on loving you more and more, just as I alway have, ever since I first knew you. It's grown deeper and deeper all the time. We were made for each other, Simon! But how are we going to love each other, if we can't see each other?"

"We can see each other—a lot. It's only——"

"I know. You're right, Simon!"

She struggled to her feet.

"Heavens!" she exclaimed, holding her watch to the faint light from the window. "It's ten minutes past

nine. I'll have to rush to catch my train!" She gazed at him pathetically, adoringly, passionately. "Oh, Simon!"

They sat side by side in the stifling subway, the world partially forgot, and what they said was felt, not heard. Only once on the way to Boston did he make a remark.

"Gosh, Vira! Funny what life does to you, isn't it? Think of me living there in Louisburg Square as a kid and working my way through Harvard as a 'biscuit-shooter,' and all that, and then marrying Clarice—and now being here with you!"

She smiled understandingly.

"I guess it was planned that way on purpose," she said. "If you hadn't been to the war and hadn't married Clarice, maybe I wouldn't be here. *Yes, I would!*" she added, shaking his hand vigorously. "I'd have been here or somewhere else with you—*anyway!*"

They entered the barnlike structure of the North Station, and, amid the panting of engines and the rumble of electric baggage-trucks, turned in her ticket at the platform-gate to a fat conductor who seemed to like their looks.

"Compartment D, Car 44," he said, peering at them over his glasses. "How many?"

The big clock pointed to three minutes of ten. She looked at him tearfully.

"It's time to say good-bye," he said, trying to smile.

"How soon shall I see you, Simon?"

"I might scoot up for a few days after the exams. I could stay at a hotel."

"That'll be wonderful! Write me—to-morrow!" She looked at the clock. The hand had slipped a minute nearer the fatal hour.

"Quick!" she exclaimed.

"What is it?"

"I forgot something!"

Grabbing his hand, she ran with him toward the entrance of the station. A row of telephone-booths lined a hallway, terminating in the semi-darkness of the vestibule. Into the last Vira dashed, pulled him inside with her, and shut the door.

"Kiss me!" she ordered. "Kiss me! Oh, Simon!"

§ 3

For the next five days Simon was as submerged with blue-books as ever Mr. Hepper had been with legal documents in the heyday of Robinson, Myer & Burr. Class Day came, and the boat-races, and finally Commencement. Simon, strolling over to the yard for a few moments of relaxation, discovered Judge Furman sitting on the steps of Holworthy Hall, wearing an enormous Panama hat and fanning himself with a palm-leaf fan.

They shook hands, Simon, who had a letter from Vira in his pocket, wondering how much the Judge suspected of his relations with his niece.

"How do you like teaching? The dean says you're doing splendidly."

"Oh, I like it well enough!" Simon sat down and lighted his pipe. "I'm getting sort of lonesome for New York, though. Pity a fellow can't practise law and teach it at the same time!

"Why can't he?" inquired the Judge. "How would you like to come in with Otto and me and have another try at it?—'Furman, Kent & Wiegand'?"

Simon's eyes gleamed.

"Do you mean it?"

"Of course I do. I'm getting along in years and want to lay off a little. Otto can't do all the work while I'm off fishing!"

"But do you think I'm really good enough?" asked Simon modestly.

"I think you're good enough to be a partner in any firm in New York! Now that you're rid of old Robinson—

"For which thank God!" interjected Simon fervently.

"—why don't you make a fresh start?—There's Dean Pound. Perhaps we can make some sort of a deal with him. Hello, Roscoe! May we speak to you a minute?"

The Dean of the Law School greeted Uncle Isaac with affectionate respect.

"What is this—a conspiracy?" he inquired genially.

"Something of the sort," admitted Judge Furman. "Do you need Simon here as much as I need him in New York?"

The Dean's face became serious.

"Of course I need him! You're not thinking of taking him away, are you?"

"I've offered him a partnership."

"Splendid!" the Dean hesitated. "Of course Professor Buskin is coming back, so his defection won't be so serious. I don't want to stand in his way of making a valuable connection—still, I am disappointed. You see I've been planning for some time to add a new course to our curriculum—on 'Liberty,' and I'd picked Simon to give it. It would only take one day a week and I could arrange to have it come on Saturdays. If you would consider—"

"He'll give it!" said Uncle Isaac, cheerfully. "There goes the band. Come on boys! 'The oldest living graduate' has got to toddle along with the procession."

§ 4

The postman, who had just delivered the mail at Mrs. Beebe's side door, crossed the lawn and shoved his pack through the hole that Oswald had made in the hedge. Simon was sitting on the ground, with his back to one of the elms, watching David's attempt to entice the half-tailed squirrel to earth by means of "Korn Pops."

"Evenin'!" said the postman. "I s'pose you'll be going away pretty soon?"

"Not me!" answered Simon. "I'm giving some courses in the Summer School."

"That so!" He fumbled with a string-tied package. "Thought I had a letter for you here somewhere, but durned if I kin find it. Here she is. Well, good night!"

He dropped an envelope into Simon's lap and started off again. Simon recognized the stationery. It was of a particularly expensive lilac-tinted bond.

"Dear Simon,

"Perhaps you have been wondering what has become of me. Well, it may interest you to know that I'm on the crest of the wave and having the time of my life. Of course there's absolutely no hard feeling between us, so far as I am concerned at least, and I hope we shall always stay good friends. If I ever said or did anything to annoy you I'm sorry. Well, Simon, now comes the "big kick." I'm going to be married,—this time to a man with money. You can have a divorce as soon as you want it. I made one mistake by talking too much and I'm not going to make another. This time I'm going to keep my mouth shut. I know you like David and you can keep him, so long as you never let on where he came from. He's yours, you understand? That's enough. As for the divorce, Paris is the quickest and it will give me a chance to buy my trousseau. Drop me a line when you could start. The *Mauretania* sails on July 7th and we can go together, if you say so. It will put people off the scent. Good luck to you! Excuse haste as I'm just starting for New London for the races.

Affectionately,

CLARICE."

Simon sat there for several minutes, with the letter in his hand, hardly crediting his eyes. No, it was not a joke! He knew Clarice—knew she meant every word in that extraordinary epistle, including the invitation to accompany her to Paris. And as the full realization of what this meant came to him, the sunlight on the lawn took on a brighter tinge, the evening air blew fresher, and, as in "Siegfried," the song of the bird on the branch of the elm above became a woman's voice, calling him to come to her.

"David!" he cried excitedly. "Hey, David!"

"What is it, daddy?"

"Say, son! How would you like to go to Paris?"

David munched a "Korn Pop," pondering the suggestion.

"All right, I guess," he said.

§ 5

Simon reached the North Station in Boston an hour ahead of train-time, and when at last he boarded the Pullman and crept into his berth, it was not to sleep. He lay there tossing for a couple of hours, then arose, put on his clothes, and joined the dosing porter in the smoking-compartment. All night long, as the train roared through the darkness, he sat there peering out of the window, watching for the first hint of daylight above the silent farms and sleeping villages. They had reached Lewiston before the blue arcs at the crossings paled against the sky—Waterville before the sun burst through the fir-topped ridges and sent the shadows racing across the fields. At Bangor he got out and bought a cup of coffee, then sought the back platform of the day-coach and stood there, as the train rattled down the single track to the Mount Desert Ferry, breathing in the sharp night

air in which the balsam of the pines was savored by the tang of the ever-nearing sea.

The sun was two hours high when they pulled into the Ferry. A stiff breeze from off the Bay of Fundy sent the whitecaps racing and tugged at Simon's hair as he leaned against the capstan at the bow and watched the mountains, that stretched like a row of gigantic elephants over the Isle of Mount Desert, loom larger and higher as the steamer churned across the ten miles of open water that separated him from Vira. She would have breakfasted by this time. What was she doing? He recalled his first trip across the bay, nine years ago. It had seemed no less beautiful then, the mountains just as mysterious, the green islands, the distant sails of the fishing-boats, and the silent inlets just as romantic. But there had been no such leap of his heart then as now.

He could not wait for the steamer to carry him around the island from Bar Harbor to Northeast, but must needs leave the boat and hire a motor: yet, although he saved a full hour by so doing, it was well after nine o'clock before the car began climbing the narrow road that leads to the cottages on School House Hill. A minute now and he would see her! At a gateway of lichen-covered rocks he leaped out and ran up the path to the Bradley door. It was open, and, without a glance at the glorious view below, he walked in. The hall was exactly as he remembered it—the same ship model on the mantel, the same comfortable wicker chairs, the same spy-glass on its tripod, the bookcases stuffed with the same well-worn volumes. A jacket—hers—lay on the oak table.

"Vira!" he called. "Vira!"

But although his voice rang through the house, there was no answer. Was she in the garden, perhaps?

A door opened from the pantry, and a pleasant-faced

woman, with a handkerchief bound about her head, emerged.

"How d'ye do, Mr. Kent," she said. "Don't you remember me? I'm Captain Spurling's wife. I've been giving Vira a hand with the cleaning, but it's most done now, and it was such a fine day she thought she'd take a tramp. So I gave her a couple of sandwiches and some coffee in a thermos, and off she went by herself, over an hour ago. Well! You've changed some since I last saw ye, but you don't look a mite older. I hear you're quite a lawyer!" She gazed at him with interest.

"Where's Miss Bradley gone?"

"Said she thought she'd go up Sargent by the Asticou Trail. 'Take it easy, now!' I told her. 'That trail ain't been fixed up yet this year. If you turned your ankle you'd have a pretty mean time a-gettin' down all by yourself!' But she just laughed. You know the way she does. 'Don't worry, I'll be all right!' she says. 'If I ain't down by six o'clock, you kin send Captain Spurling up after me with a lantern.' Say, she's lookin' fine, ain't she?"

Simon acceded to this last.

"You needn't send the captain after her. I'll go myself," he shouted over his shoulder, as he hurried down the path to the taxi. "Drive me over to Asticou and then drop my suitcase at the Kimball House!"

The "Asticou Trail" to Sargent Mountain summit follows the gravel path toward Jordan's Pond, but, before reaching the ridge that separates the Hadlock Valley from what is known as the Amphitheatre, turns sharply to the left up Cedar Swamp Mountain. It is a good two hours' climb, and there are many inviting by-paths, mossy ravines, and sunny hollows where a young lady, with the day before her, might well be tempted to

stray. She might, Simon reflected, have gone anywhere! There were half a dozen ways up Sargent, even if you started out from Asticou, one as beautiful as another. There could be no certainty as to which she had chosen. It was even within the possibilities that she wouldn't climb the mountain at all, but would content herself with dreaming the day away in some shadowed dell, reading a book. The best he could do was to climb as fast as possible, and, if he did not overtake her, to wait on the summit, in the hope that she would eventually arrive there.

It was a gorgeous early summer day, with a touch of spring still lingering in the deeper recesses of the woods. The brooks were full, the banks oozing with dampness and lush with tender green leaves of bunch-berry, pitcher-plant, and sproutings of bright grass. Everywhere was the gurgle and flash of running water pouring in columns into brown pools or lashing out over sun-flecked shallows, where the shadows of minnows hovered and were gone. The woods were alive with half-hidden presences, and echoed to the flutings of the thrush and warbler. When Simon stood still he could hear the melodious tinkle of water in near-by unseen caverns, the flutter of invisible wings, the chatter of squirrels, the minute thump of pine-cones, the crackle of twigs and seed-pods, as from branch to branch they fell to earth. Here were patches of wild cabbage with leaves like elephants' ears, bunches of purple Clintonia, trifolium, and an occasional wild orchid. He could catch at moments an elusive whiff of Indian grass. Above the bright green of beech and maple flickered the silver leaves of poplars, and against the black patches made by the firs and pines gleamed the white and gold of the birch trunks. His eye sped down long alleys of straight rough boles, pierced the thickets of viburnum and

alder, and peered into shadowy recesses beneath the overhanging rocks, hoping to catch the flash of a skirt or the page of a book. But she was not there. A squirrel, perhaps, or a cotton-tail, or even a doe hiding in the deep glades from the noon-day glare—but no Vira. By this time, no doubt, she was striding like a Walküre along the granite ridges which met in a wild Valhalla in the island's centre.

Badly winded, he emerged at last upon the lower escarpment of Cedar Swamp Mountain, from which he could look ahead and scan the whole sweep of the highlands. But there was no sign of her. She had either not gone that way or was hidden in some pocket or resting on some ledge, beyond his vision. Why had he not telegraphed her? This business of surprising women was never a success. It was always the would-be surpriser who was surprised—or disappointed!

Simon hurried on until he reached the path that traversed the edge of the bluff overlooking the Amphitheatre. Five hundred feet below him swayed a green ocean of foliage, over which swept, from time to time, a hurrying cloud shadow or a catspaw of wind that rippled the poplars into whitecaps. Across the abyss rose the gray and mauve bastions of Jordan Mountain, curving to a cliff at the head of the valley—a pulpit of rock from which a prophet could have addressed a multitude. Here Moses, bearing the Two Tables, might have stood and looked down upon the Children of Israel. But, although his eyes eagerly sought every jutting hummock and boulder, there was no sign of human presence. He reached the top of Cedar Swamp and descended to the little ravine below, hoping to find her at the spring, but there was no trace of her. Perhaps, he thought, she was lying on a bank of white moss in a neighboring grove.

"Vira! Oh, Vi-ra!" he shouted.

There was no answer save the faint echo from across the valley.

He drank from the tin cup, dented by the vandal bullet of some winter hunter, and scrambled on. He was on the plateau now between the summits of Jordan, Cedar Swamp, and Sargent—a rocky waste like the playground of some vanished race of giants. Behind and below him stretched the island-strewn coast, promontory after promontory lying in echelon, the surf creaming on half-sunken reefs, white lighthouses and the sails of distant coasting vessels glinting like sea-gulls in the sun.

He dipped into the alder thicket that hides the gully at the foot of the last ascent, leaped the dried watercourse, and hastened on upwards toward the summit. He hardly looked at the brimming blue world that lay in that wide semicircle all about him. He saw only the patched gray rocks, the sparkling slabs of gneiss, the blueberry bushes and sheep-laurel, the checkerberry beside the path. A hundred yards ahead of him rose the triangular monument that marked the crest. She was not there! He was alone on the top of the world! On every side spread a bewildering panorama of lakes and rivers, ridge after ridge of lilac hills rooted in purple valleys, vast stretches of forest and of farm-land, and, to the west, a thousand silver bays and inlets that melted at last into the shining thread of the Penobscot. What was all this beauty to him, if he had to look upon it alone!

With knees trembling and pain in his chest, he sank down upon a ledge. He had made the ascent in forty minutes! For what? What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world—! There was nothing worth having, nothing worth achieving, without his heart's desire. Gradually the pumping of that organ subsided. He would wait for her—an hour or two, anyhow.

The breeze was cool, and he sheltered himself behind a pile of rocks to smoke, watching the peaks about him darken beneath the floating cloud-islands and blaze forth again as they passed.

Then he became aware of a peculiar and unexpected sound—a dog's sniff. A few feet away, regarding him inquisitively, stood a collie—an obviously ancient collie, for his eyes were dim and he moved with effort. Simon's heart thumped.

"White Chief! Come here! Good dog!"

The collie's tail wagged slowly and he took a step in Simon's direction. At the same moment an Airedale, followed by a small, animated ball of white fluff, came trotting around a hummock.

"Pat! Toby!"

They approached gingerly, sniffing his ankles. Then the Airedale uttered a bark of recognition and began to paw him.

Simon sprang to his feet.

"Here, boys! Where's your mistress?"

All three dogs were yelping now.

"Vira!" he called. "Vi-ra! Where are you?"

The ball of fluff had scurried toward the monument. and Simon followed and walked around it.

Vira was standing there. For an instant she went white at the start he gave her; then all her color came back in a rush. In her blue woollen sweater and small round worsted cap, with its white topknot, she looked barely sixteen.

"Simon!—My darling one!" she gasped. "Where did you come from? How you frightened me!"

"O, Vira! I've missed you so!" he cried as he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"It seemed like eternity!" she said, freeing her lips. —"Too dreadful! You must never leave me, Simon!"

Again they kissed—gazed at one another—and kissed again.

"Come!" she said, and pulling him down beside her, nestled her head against his shoulder.

"What a nice hollow there is there!" she murmured.

They lay on the warm rocks, gazing up into the sky. Far up in the limitless blue hung an eagle, motionless, it first seemed, at that vast distance. Then it moved, etching its way across the cup of the sky. Two eagles!

"I feel just as they must!" he said. "Strong and free and happy, as if I could look down on life as they are looking down on the earth—and as we are!"

The sun was sinking toward the Camden Hills when they started down the mountain, hardly conscious of fatigue. She had shared her sandwiches and coffee with him, and at the spring they drank again. The glitter of the morning had faded imperceptibly into the magic haze of afternoon. They were on the lower slope now and the bareness of the rocks had given place to a variegated carpet of mosses and wild flowers. The air was full of grassy smells, pungent with the odor of thyme and juniper, fragrant of fir and balsam. From the valley far below came the faint tinkle of cowbells, from the bay the faint put-put of motor-boats. They were descending into the world of men again—together.

Half-way down, at the foot of a rocky bit of path, she stopped.

"Do you remember this place, Simon?" she asked.

He looked about, searching his memory.

"I can't say I do!" he admitted. "What about it?"

"This is the place where I slipped and turned my ankle, when I was a little girl—and you carried me home in your arms."

"Oh, so I did!"

"Is that all you remember?" she persisted. "Oh, dear! Was that nothing but love's young dream?"

"I remember you didn't seem very heavy."

She fumbled beneath her sweater and extracted something from her pocket.

"Do you recall that?"

He examined it curiously.

"Isn't it the root I found and gave to you once? Looks like a 'V.' Do you mean to tell me you've carried that around ever since?"

She nodded.

"I have—as a sort of mascot! I had it with me when I applied for a job at the typewriter company's bureau. You see—it worked!"

"But what about my carrying you down the mountain?"

She pulled him over to her, and, elevating herself upon her toes, laid her cheek against his.

"We did that," she said. "I nearly died of happiness!"

He kissed the place.

"That's better, isn't it?"

The shadows were creeping up the mountain-sides on the flood-tide of evening, and the valleys were lakes of purple dusk, overhung by mists of bronze. Against the cliff of Jordan, a quarter-mile distant, their shadows loomed gigantic.

"How big we are!" she laughed, waving at his reflection.

"This is our big moment!" he informed her.

It was nearly six o'clock when they reached the village of Northeast Harbor. A yellow moon, three-quarters full, was just lifting out of the cobalt sea beyond Cranberry Island.

"How about a sail?" she suggested. "Captain Spurling only finished bending on the new sails yesterday, and we ought to try them."

They found the captain still aboard the *Cyrrus*. He'd heard, through the missus, of Simon's arrival, he said, and was glad to see him lookin' so hearty. As for the sloop, she couldn't be in better shape, he declared, if he'd worked on her all winter. He reckoned they wouldn't want him to go along, would they? He kinder thought not! He'd set the jib and haul up the mainsail and turn her over to 'em. They'd find some bananas in the cuddy, if they got hungry.

Once outside the harbor beyond Greening's Island, the breeze stiffened and the *Cyrrus* heeled to her scuppers. It had been a long time since Simon had held a tiller in his hand, and he thrilled to the leap of the bow as she met the swells and he felt once more the salt spray upon his forehead.

A thousand white horses were racing landward, and the *Cyrrus* tugged at her bit, trying to follow them. Ahead the Cranberries, with their clusters of houses, still gleamed in the sunlight. Astern, the mountain-tops that rimmed Somes's Sound were ridged with fire, and the sky was full of scarlet feathers. Companies of sea-gulls slowly winged their way seaward against the sunset, to seek their nesting-places on the outlying islands. The floor of the ocean was iridescent, like watered silk, reflecting both the orange and red in the west and the yellow orb above the masthead. To the east, night was drawing its gray net across the sea. Distance—time—reality had vanished in a mysterious half-light, neither of sun nor moon.

"Say, Vira!" said Simon, exerting all his strength to keep the *Cyrrus* to the wind. "Feel in my breast-pocket

and give me the paper that's there, will you? I can't leave go the rudder."

She thrust her hand into his bosom and drew forth Clarice's letter.

"Just read it!"

She sank on the deck of the cockpit, out of reach of the spray, and perused it obediently. When she looked up at him there was a look in her eyes that he had never seen there.

"Oh, Simon! she cried. "How wonderful!"

"Sit here!" he said, dragging her down next to him in the stern-sheets. "Do you see that moon? It's only two hundred and forty thousand miles away, you know. We're going to follow the moon-path out through the Western Way and sail—and sail—just like this——!"

She looked at him gravely.

"And then what?" she asked.